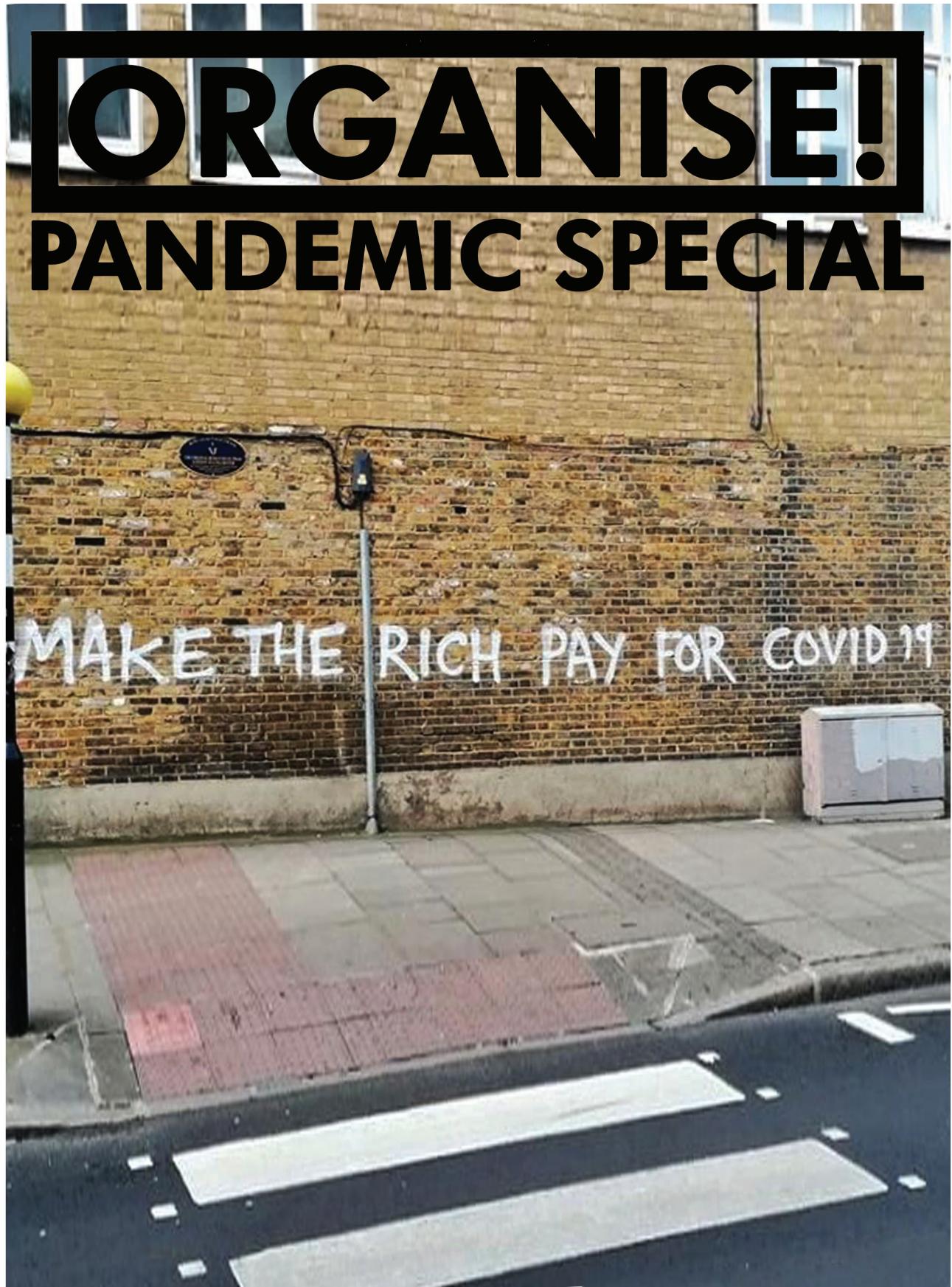


# **ORGANISE!**

## **PANDEMIC SPECIAL**

**MAKE THE RICH PAY FOR COVID 19**





# WSO ISOLATION FEST

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## We're at a very strange time in our lives.

In the first week of April, one third of renters in America did not pay. Here in the UK, tenants' unions swell at such a rate that it's hard for them to keep up the admin as the call for **rent strike** saturate social media. The imminent pandemic has seen some four thousand mutual aid collectives spring up as around the world workers have taken to strike action, securing victories across the board.

The same bastards who laughed as they blocked a pay rise for nurses now clapping on the door step and calling them heroes. As they do that, half a dozen nurses die alone because in 2017 the Tories ignored advice to stockpile PPE. They couldn't see the cost/benefit.

Labour meanwhile have voted in a centrist as top dog. He's more likely to win they say. Never mind that his politically spit in the face of everything that just a few months ago they swore they believed in whole heartedly. The fantasy of radical reform in the ballot box now tumbling down around the wishful thinkers.

**The DOW Jones had its best day since 1933.**

The streets are filling up with a revolutionary susurration, you talk to anyone on your daily allotted mooooch and you'll hear how pissed they are, how close they are to spilling over. The boss has fucked them over, landlord's demanding rent and four weeks ago the governments plan was to let their nan die to protect the economy.

Now the cops want to snoop in your shopping and lock you up if they don't think it was an essential trip. People aren't fools and they can read past the saccharine smiles and promises. The stench of Tory hubris oozes out of the TV screen on a nightly basis and the people are waiting in limbo holding their breath, waiting. Not only for lock down to be over but for something to happen, a spark of change.

The fealty capitalism had built up with it's promises of comfort and security have been washed away. The names of dead nurses betrayed by the state will not be forgotten and the "we're a family" bullshit from your boss even harder to buy. We're heading into the peak of Covid-19's death rates and the majority of people are sat at home realising just how disposable we are to them, how little the preventable deaths of family and friends means to them. Left wondering, "what can I do about it?"

Now is the time for revolutionary anarchists and our fellow travellers to shoot for the brass hoop and take action.

We must stop with the dilly dally and set about work empowering the local voices. We need to be push back and get busy organising at the grass root, setting up ad hoc tenants unions, strike assemblies and fronts for action various. It is critical that we help empower our communities as the government continues to spew false promises and lies. Our greatest weapon right now is every day mutual aid, the more we strengthen the bonds in our neighbourhoods the more people come to the realisation that they don't need any parasite, blue or red, to tell them who they are and what they should do with their lives.

We cannot sit idle, waiting for the lock down to pass and for things to return to normal. That would be a return to an insidious sickness, the abusive worship of capitalism. No, we must organise and strike back. That begins with sharing ideas and taking inspiration from each other.

Pulled together in short notice and little rough on the edges this special edition of **Organise!** contains a wealth of statements, thoughts and plans for action that I hope inspire you to get your people together and get plotting.

We are but a small drop in the ocean, please take the time to look up the organisations who made contributions and read more about what they do and how they go about it.

After you've finished reading I highly suggest taking time to catch up on the ongoing coverage from the likes of **Freedom News** and **Libcom**. You'll also find a compilation of articles from across the Anarchist spectrum from **The Anarchist Library** that is well worth diving into.

Check in with your local groups, find out what they are up to and how you can get involved in organising down your ends. If you are organising, you are winning. Reach within you, and find the means by which to take back your freedom. Your fate and that of everyone you know, depends on it.

Together we are stronger.  
To the revolution now!

Peter Ó Máille  
Editor of Organise!

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Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). As anarchist communists we fight for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst communities, and people are free to reach their full potential. We do this by supporting working class resistance to exploitation and oppression, organise alongside our neighbours and workmates, host informative events, and produce publications that help make sense of the world around us.

We publish twice a year with the aim to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers and play host to any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, feel free to contact us through any of the details below. The articles in this issue do not represent the collective viewpoint of the AF unless stated as such. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air! We hope that this publication will help that debate to take place.

Articles can be submitted directly to us at:  
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## WTF is Mutual Aid?

Russian revolutionary and anarchist communist Petr Kropotkin wrote *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* in 1902 as a direct response to contemporary Malthusian misinterpretations of Darwin's theories of evolution by natural selection. These held that the struggle for survival of organism against organism forces us to conclude that human nature must be understood as being driven by competition for personal benefit. Kropotkin wished to show that there are other contexts of struggle in which cooperation, rather than competition, among members of the same species – particularly those in which organisms are pitted against the harshness of surrounding environments – is what allows organisms and species to persevere through unbelievably harsh conditions. These forms of struggle are characterised by what he termed mutual aid.

Whilst we may not all agree that nature ought to be anything that offers us comfort, solace or moral guidance in human terms, history shows us that during times of crisis, the principle of mutual aid – neighbours cooperate with neighbours, essentially – is often the most rapid and effective way in which practical support can be provided to those that need it. At the same time, it offers a

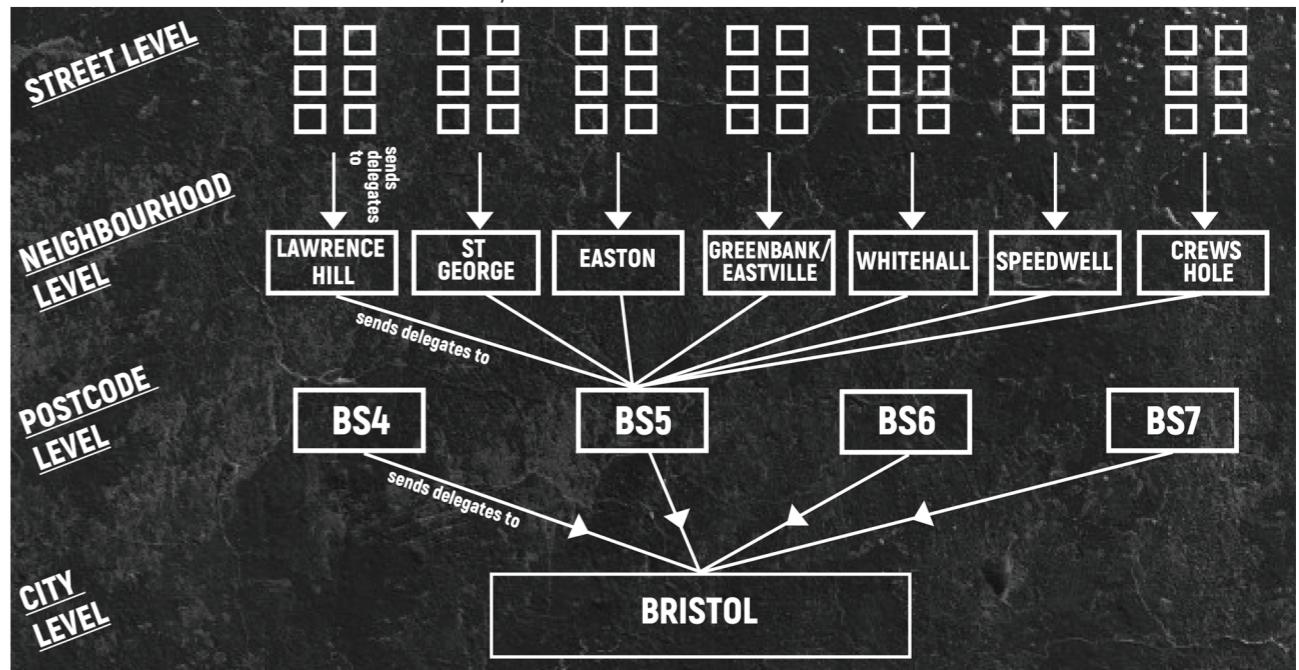
meaningful and useful activity with which anyone in the community can get involved.

As people gather together quickly to respond, an initial period characterised by both fear and excitement will inevitably be followed by one of questions to do with coordination; how potentially large numbers of people can meet, communicate and work together; how can material support be sourced or produced and then distributed; how to delegate tasks and share leadership functions without getting lost in squabbles over struggles for power and prestige...

We can draw on a wealth of examples from recent history that provide useful and concrete suggestions for those of us organising today, either in response to extraordinary conditions or as part of a broader struggle for a society ravaged by centuries of structural injustice and over exploitation by the capitalist system.

These groups can teach us how to handle and overcome these frightening and disrupting initial experiences, fuelled by the conviction that we cooperate together or die separately.

Plan C ■  
[www.weareplanc.org](http://www.weareplanc.org)



## Why we feel so driven to help each other through the coronavirus crisis

**Empty supermarket shelves** and panicked government briefings have become the defining images of the coronavirus crisis. But the community response, however, may well be a more enduring feature. The virus and the enforcement of social isolation have sparked uncertainty and anxiety. But a range of local volunteer-run mutual aid networks have also emerged.

Many of the people involved in these groups know that the term "mutual aid" was made famous by the 19th-century anarchist Peter Kropotkin. He used it to attack Social Darwinists who described nature as a competitive fight between self-interested individuals. "Survival of the fittest" became their catch phrase and was used to describe antagonistic relationships between people, races and states. This way of thinking normalised aggression as a natural response to scarcity.

In the present context, the implication is that scrapping for the last bottle of hand sanitiser or roll of toilet paper is a programmed, inevitable response. If only the strongest survive, then others should be seen as rivals or even enemies and we are right to take all necessary measures to preserve ourselves against them.

Although Kropotkin accepted that competition was a factor determining biological fitness, his argument was that cooperation – or mutual aid – was as significant.

As an ethical idea, mutual aid describes the efforts people make to help others without seeking reward. It thrives in local, voluntary organisation. The Lifeboat Association, initiated in the UK by William Hillary to support the foundation of a national institution to save victims of shipwrecks,

was an example of the ethical self-organising that Kropotkin had in mind.

Hillary appealed to the king in 1825 to support his project, explaining that his aim was to aid "people and vessels of every nation, whether in peace or in war". His cause was at once "individual, national, and universal". He imagined that the establishment of a British association would inspire the foundation of sister organisations across the world.

Kropotkin liked the Lifeboat Association because it relied on "cooperation ... enthusiasm ... local knowledge". It rescued anyone in need and because it depended on local action, it could be replicated easily elsewhere. It was a template for global networking to build solidarity.

### Working together in a time of crisis

This is the spirit we see in the support networks emerging as people confront the coronavirus pandemic. Neighbours helping neighbours. Those who are able to leave their homes are collecting prescriptions and essential supplies for the vulnerable. Groups networking across towns and cities are pooling resources so that no one is left without.

Community support has always been a core aspect of human social life. Research looking at the way people go about their different everyday tasks shows that far more time than we might imagine is spent on unpaid community support. Mutual aid and cooperation – such as neighbours looking after each other's children or helping each other fix their cars – run through society. It is a mistake to think that the prospect of profit motivates our behaviour.

Mutual aid is often seen in times of crisis or horrible catastrophe – for example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in the US and the Grenfell fire in London. Its emergence now bears out Kropotkin's observations about the capacity for everyday solidarity.

The question he would ask is: how can we expand these practices to rethink our social organisation?

Kropotkin described the Lifeboat Association as "perfectly spontaneous". This did not mean that he thought it was unplanned. It meant that it was not forced by law. Trust and practice were essential to Kropotkin's vision of the world remade through cooperation and respect for local self-determination.

With resources stretched to their limits, governments all over the world are relying on mutual aid networks to help those most at risk by shopping for those in isolation or sending virtual messages of support to prevent demoralisation. Perhaps, then, we can start to think about how to preserve community-based organisation in the post-coronavirus world.

There is a significant difference between the politics of mutual aid and neo-liberal projects intended to privatisate government services. Kropotkin did not want to see responsibility for government services devolved to big corporations or cash strapped volunteers. His aim was to attack existing power structures. Mutual aid thrives in conditions of equality and it is a necessary part of an anarchist drive towards decentralised federation.

If business-as-usual austerity returns after the crisis, the fertile ground of mutual aid may well dry up. The maintenance and extension of basic income, in contrast, may help preserve and promote grassroots social change in the longer term. ■

Ruth Kinna & Thomas Swann  
Anarchist Research Group

**Ruth is a Professor of Political Theory and Thomas is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Loughborough University.**

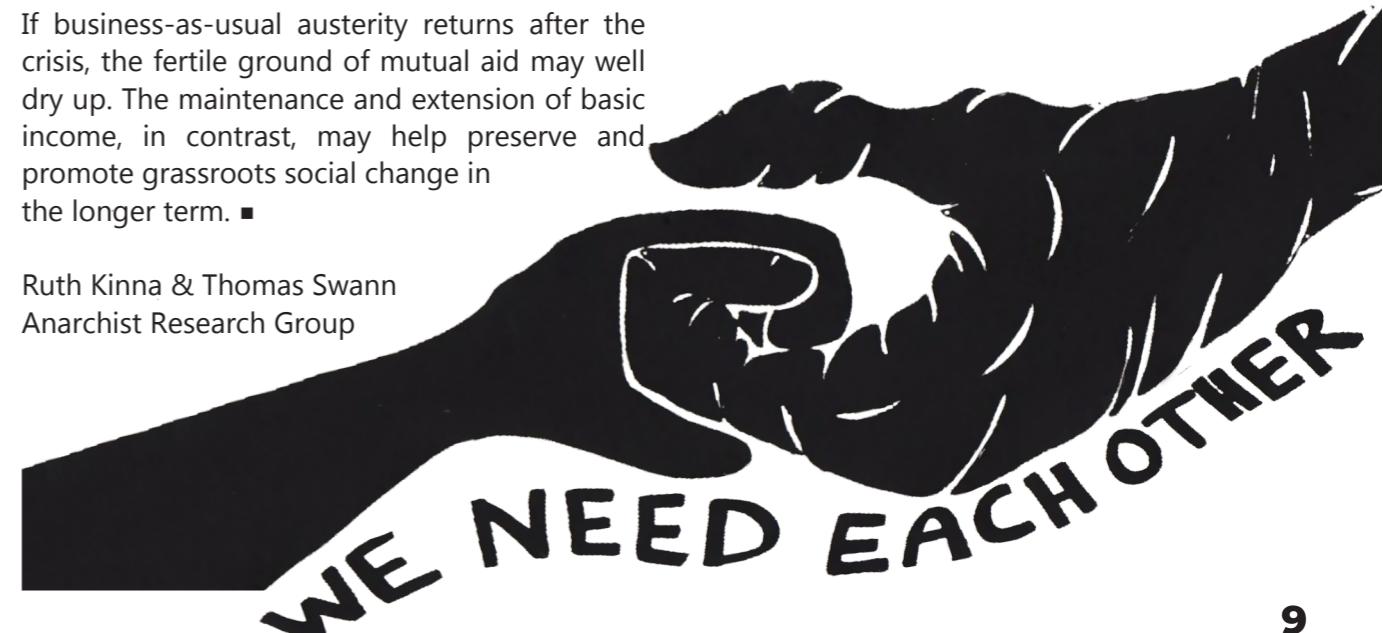
**The ARG was established in 2008. It contributes to the social, political and cultural theory strand of the Communication and Culture Beacon at Loughborough University and is networked internationally through the Anarchist Studies Network (a specialist group of the UK Political Studies Association).**

**The group also collaborates with the Politicised Practice Research Group in the Critical Citizenship, Activism and Art initiative.**

**You can find out more here:-**  
[www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/politics-international-studies/research/arg](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/politics-international-studies/research/arg)

**This article first was published on The Conversation**

[www.theconversation.com/this-anarchist-thinker-helps-explain-why-we-feel-so-driven-to-help-each-other-through-the-coronavirus-crisis-134494](http://www.theconversation.com/this-anarchist-thinker-helps-explain-why-we-feel-so-driven-to-help-each-other-through-the-coronavirus-crisis-134494)



## Mutual Aid For the Masses

### Nobody expected this innit.

There is this elderly couple living next door to mine, they are good at gardening. Above them, there is a household full of hipsters. On the other side of my house, there lives a big family, they are equal parts very nice and keeping to themselves as much as they can. Downstairs from my flat, a lady with a particular liking for late-night jam sessions lives. There is also this young guy I occasionally share a cheeky spliff with, while simultaneously, and rather awkwardly, not knowing each other's names and being familiar with quite a bit of each others' lives. And a builder I sometimes chat with on my way home from work, mostly about power tools. And the kids endlessly partying behind my house, while remaining cool af.

Until recently, these were the only neighbours I've gotten to know well enough to exchange greetings or have a chat with, knock their door when I needed someone to pick up a parcel or say hi to each other when we go about our daily business. We have never talked about other things, let alone politics.

And then COVID-19 hit. In response, and defiance of the initial Tory government's approach of just ignoring the issue and allowing (potentially) hundreds of people to die, Mutual Aid groups have started to form across the country, quickly reaching very high numbers. By now, such groups appeared in literally every corner of the UK, quickly reaching thousands in numbers, and millions in involved individuals.

That is how I have met pretty much all my neighbours, at once.

My local group, rather annoyingly formed around the electoral ward I had not known existed until three weeks ago, at present has 200ish strong WhatsApp group. Due to how busy that group

chat got, it had to be divided into smaller chats, and at present, there is one on pretty much each street around me. They all keep themselves busy with providing community assistance of all sorts to people who found themselves self-isolating: be it help with shopping or running errands or just lending a friendly ear to the folk not dealing too well with long periods of isolation.

Looking at it from the anarchist perspective, it is a difficult one. On one side, it is genuinely heartwarming to see that many people discovering the beauty and benefits of Mutual Aid. Frankly, I sincerely hope that Peter Kropotkin is opening a champagne from his grave to celebrate this sudden popularity of his concepts. On the other hand, for now at least, many of these groups seem to follow the "Big Society" trope, so to speak, opting for providing immediate charity-like support to their neighbours, while staying totally a-political. At the same time, the more politically oriented comrades present in

this group are aching to push them towards the direction of radical politics. Sometimes this is met with sympathy, sometimes not so much. On top of this, there is also some party politics folks trying to divert their groups into more official, government so to speak path.

The question the anarchists are asking themselves now is: how do we take these groups from this level to more radical politics? And how do we keep these groups alive in the post-COVID-19 world?

My answer to this question may be controversial to some. I say: wait. Work with your neighbours, deliver this shopping to that elderly lady, call up a stranger for a chat. Don't be that annoying preacher. Nobody likes these guys anyway. Do not try to "weed-out the liberals", as it was put in a message to me by someone complaining about said liberals in their Mutual Aid group.



© Guy Smallman

Do not try to argue about the smallest thing someone said and you disagree with.

Do not try to organise some sort of fast-track course in radical anti-authoritarian politics and if you can't resist the temptation, then do not get offended when people question you. Instead, make your case. Let people learn their own ways.

Obviously, there must be some kind of common denominator among people we work with right now. One can very briefly summarise it in a simple "fash, racists, bigots, sexists and other wankers of this sort must fuck off", but otherwise, try to work with as wide group of people as possible.

Right now, millions of people in the UK and worldwide are sitting at home. Nobody knows for how long this will last. Many will be struggling due to the sudden job loss. Some others will be working remotely, and, in many cases, having thoughts about how important and meaningful their job really is: or is it not. Some workers, such as the people making sure that we can still get essential supplies, have our deliveries ending up where they were meant to, or not drown in rubbish; will discover that their jobs, despite of not being particularly high up on the capitalist social ladder both by wages and social respect, are indeed more necessary and appreciated than those of bankers, stock brokers, CEOs and politicians. Hopefully, this by itself will lead to a shit in what we, as a society, consider as an important work, and what can be disposed of.

The NHS workers will spend this time trying to protect as many lives as they can with the limited resources they are being provided with.

Millions will be worrying about how to pay their bills. Some will be subjected to abusive partner 24/7, while others will be struggling due to loneliness. Some will have to, likely for the first time in their lives, ask total strangers for help, while the others, also for the first time in their lives, will provide such help. »

Many will be suffer racist abuse related to COVID-19, and frequently this will be on top of the xenophobia they have been experiencing already. Some will be stuck indoors with people bigoted enough to abuse them based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other. Some will suffer simply because of the lack of appropriate housing- or lack of housing at all.

Meanwhile, the inequalities caused by capitalism will be more visible to the wider population than ever.

Some more privileged people will pay their way of this crisis, be it by hiding in their second homes while risking spreading the virus to more remote places, or just by being able to afford private healthcare. Some will not worry about their wages as they are rich enough not to. Some others will get richer on this crisis. Some will be spending their isolation time in the comfort of their big comfy houses. Some will isolate surrounded by their cleaners, gardeners, drivers, child minders and tutors, all working hard to make the whole experience as comfortable as possible; oblivious to the fact that the people serving them may not be in the position to object: or they will not care enough, assuming that money indeed can buy you everything.

If we are lucky, this will make people question more than they had in the living memory what the system they live in really is. This may take time, but when they do, one of the options they will be left is to go to their local mutual group chat and talk with others, exchanging ideas, worries and help.

My local group is already increasingly exploring more radical than bringing someone shopping activities, such as, at the point of writing, discussing how they could help someone who's landlord is threatening eviction, or provide community help to people who, despite COVID-19 disaster, still remain declared "illegal" by the Home Office.

Anarchists are not playing the centralised, leadership politics game, and as such, must strive for wide, decentralised, grassroots movements involving big chunks of society in order to change things towards the desired direction. Anarchists are also not in the ideological purity game as far as I am concerned.

Broad, successful grassroots movements have this one thing in common: they emerge from need. They seem like a better option than status quo. Mutual Aid during COVID-19 pandemic seems to me like such need. Even if nothing will come out of it directly, at the end of the day people involved in these groups will be left with an experience of doing stuff in their local community, together with their neighbours, in a mutual aid spirit. This experience will stay with them, ready to be recreated again, this time with already existing links between people.

If we are lucky, we will not fuck it up. ■

Zosia Brom  
Editor of Freedom News

**Freedom is an independent, radical co-op controlled by its volunteers, The collective runs Britain's oldest anarchist press which has been in operation since the 1886 and its largest bookshop which is located in Whitechapel, London.**

**Freedom compiled a very useful list of mutual aid groups here in the UK and helped organise the national effort, supporting countless groups and helping them to set up.**

[www.freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list](http://www.freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list)

**Photography Copyright of Guy Smallman**

**FREEDOM**



## CLAPTON AGAINST CORONA HARSHIP FUND

### Clapton CFC Hardship Fund

We designed The Hardship Fund, now live, to provide financial help to Clapton CFC members. No criteria or strings – simply on the basis of need.

There is obviously a limit to our ability to raise money so we ask anyone seeking help to use the following as a guide when requesting funds:

Food: £50  
Bills: £100  
Rent help: £200

This is merely a guide and you can request the amount you need. You don't have to specify what you need the money for. Nor is there an upper limit. When funds are exhausted, then they are gone.

If you need help, email [finance@claptoncfc.co.uk](mailto:finance@claptoncfc.co.uk) and let us know. The club's Community

Outreach Committee is keeping track of how much we raise and assuming there are funds, then we will ask for your bank details and then transfer funds over.

That's it – when things start to improve, we hope people will decide to undertake their own solidarity to someone who needs help, but that's entirely up to you.

If you are in Britain and you need other help where you live, find a local mutual aid group at: [www.covidmutualaid.org](http://www.covidmutualaid.org).

We would also encourage anyone wanting and able to help the most vulnerable in our society to donate to Hackney Migrant Centre's Covid-19 Emergency Fund which you can read about at :

[www.hackneymigrantcentre.org.uk/covid-19-emergency-fund](http://www.hackneymigrantcentre.org.uk/covid-19-emergency-fund)

[www.claptoncfc.co.uk/forum](http://www.claptoncfc.co.uk/forum) ■



# SWARM

Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement

## Help us build a hardship fund for sex workers in crisis

**During the current** COVID-19 outbreak in the UK, many sex workers are seeing a dramatic decrease in clients and work. As more and more people will be self-isolating over the coming weeks, it's going to get worse.

Like other precariously employed workers, sex workers do not have a monthly salary we can rely on. We don't get sick pay. Many of us exist without savings of any kind.

The most marginalised are the most at risk. We often have nowhere to turn if clients stop coming to see us, and can face poverty or homelessness.

Our community is facing a crisis.

SWARM is launching a hardship fund to help the sex workers who are most in need. All donations made to SWARM from 13th March - 30th April will go directly to this fund, and will provide mutual aid to sex workers in the UK who are in severe financial hardship.

We are asking for donations from allies, from organisations, and from other sex workers who feel in a position to help.

Please support the sex worker community during this uncertain time.

We know times are tough for everyone right now, and we welcome donations of all size. Here are some suggested amounts:

Those with a little to spare: £5

Those who earn less than £30k a year: £10-20

Those who earn £30-80k a year : £20-100

Those who earn more than £80k a year: we ask that you consider making a substantial donation of £200+ and above. ■

You can donate here:-  
[www.swarmcollective.org/donate](http://www.swarmcollective.org/donate)

**Right now, thousands** and thousands of people are cut off from easy access to vital resources which most of us would normally take for granted such as cafes, shops and utilities.

We've included these cut outs so that If you feel able and inclined to share your resources you can just cut out these signs and stick them up in your window.

You'll be surprised how easy it is to help your community out. ■

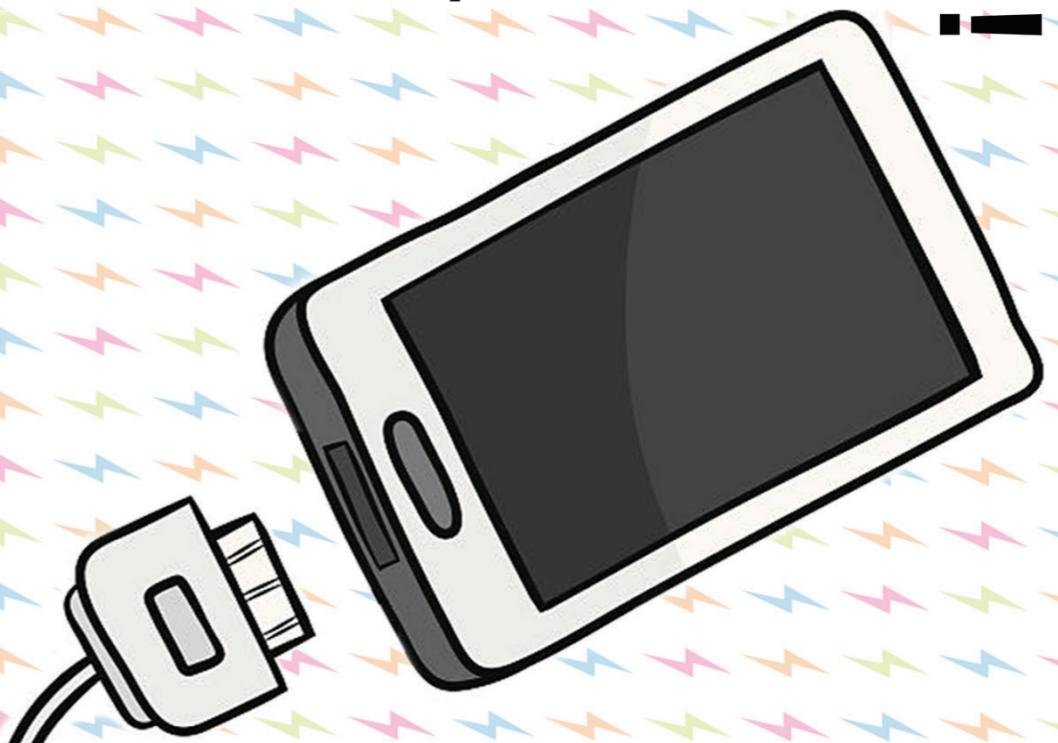
# Charging point available here!

If you would like something charged up here, then please leave the item by the door, knock on the door and then step back 2 meters.

We will work out an agreed time for you to come back for the item.

The item will be charged and cleaned and given back to you at the arranged time.

We will happily do this at no cost to you.

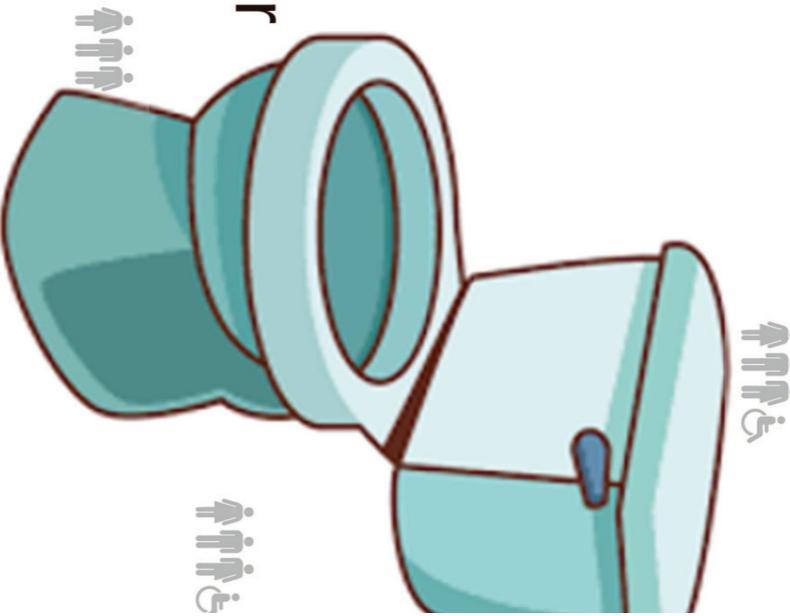


# Toilet available here!

Need to use the toilet? Just knock and then step back 2 meters.

let us know that you need to use the toilet and we will show you where it is!

we won't charge you for using our bog! Just be neat and wipe the seat.



# Water top up available here!



If you are in need of water, please leave your bottle by the door, knock and then step back 2 meters.

The bottle will be cleaned and brought back to you full.

Happy to fill any size and any number of bottles.

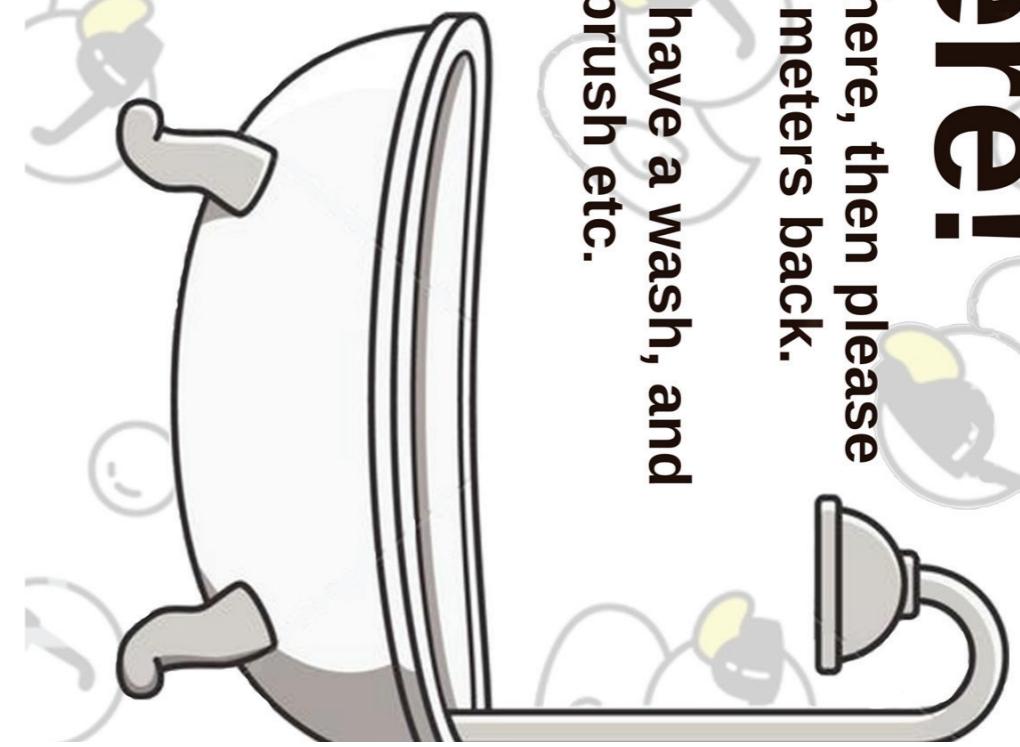
**Laundry point  
available here!**

Need your clothes cleaned? Then please leave it on the doorstep, knock and then step back 2 meters.



Explain that you want your clothes washed and whether you want them dried as well. Then we can arrange a time for you to come pick them up.

This won't cost you anything.



We will then get the bathroom ready for you, and then come back to get you, then we'll leave you to it, just let us know when your finished.

If you would like to wash yourself here, then please knock on the door and then step 2 meters back.

Let us know that you would like to have a wash, and if you need soap, clean towel, hairbrush etc.

## MUTUAL AID PPE

I have this silly notion.

People, well I think they are essentially a good sort. The natural state of your average Joe is generally wanting to look after the people around them and help those in need.

Here in the UK the refusal of the government to take specialist advice back in 2017 has left the NHS with a critical shortage of eye protection (as well ask masks and other PPE) Medical institutions around the country were forced to reach out and ask for help, and they were heard.

The moment the critical shortage of PPE became evident armed with a designed by Joseph Prusa the 3D printing community stepped up to fill the void. Right now there are hundreds of makers from across the country currently donating their print time and their materials to produce these shields, they have hospitals across the country asking for supplies.

If you have a 3d printer, or know anyone with one, there is a group of ~700 people across the UK who are organising to print masks for NHS workers. If you go to the website below, you can sign up to help out (there are roles for people without printers, i believe) or request masks (if you work in the NHS).



There is also a fundraiser to help support them. Reality is they only have so much material on hand and can only afford so much to donate. So they're looking for support to allow them to cover the cost of materials and transport of these masks where ever they are needed. E

Each kilo of PETG filament can, on average, print around 20 face shield frames, each kilo of filament costs on average around £20 per spool even now they have orders for 70, 100, 800- shields to be delivered asap, so they need your support.

They need filament. They need elastic. They plastic sheets for the visors. It's with your help they'll be able afford this and keep our NHS staff healthy, as they should never have to work without vital PPE. They are sharing their masks under #TheBigPrint so please take time to share some for the fantastic efforts which are directly saving lives that the government neglected to protect. The link to the fundraiser is at the bottom of this piece.

Meanwhile countless makers armed with sewing machines have been making face masks. Around the world people are busy beavering away to help protect their communities. We've seen thousands of professionals take up producing clinical grade surgical masks for clinical staff while many more are producing home made masks, which while unable

to not fine enough a filter to stop Covid-19 alone they do reduce the amongst of particulate matter which the virus rides on. As part of a robust practice of high hygiene and social distancing it's these masks which are mitigating spread and protecting our communities. In an ideal world we would all have FFP2/3 respirators but that just isn't possible and really, any respirators of that grade need to be in the hands of clinical staff.

To aid this effort, here is some advise for people who want to help this effort, produce masks and protect their communities!

Consider these the guiding standards for your efforts!

- 1)** Use designs which tie behind the head this reduces face touching and stays on face better than designs with loop.
- 2)** It should be easy to bleach wash, so use light coloured monotone or pure white fabric.
- 3)** It should cover the brim of the nose and go under chin expanding well across the face.
- 4)** Masks should accommodate different head sizes with same pattern size.

**5)** It should be wearable for a long period of time, so make it breathable and from a soft material.

**6)** Two layers of cotton seem to be the golden ticket right now but refer to the graph.

**7)** Remember that when washed, fabrics shrink!

**8)** Use a simple design that doesn't waste fabric so you can produce them quickly and in quantity.

**9)** Uses a straight cut for mass production and less waste of fabric (vs mask design with rounded edges that wastes fabric).

Test your masks out for a while before making a hundred of them!

Are they comfy, do they fit?

Can you breath ok?

Could you wear it all day?

The Good Clothing Company have shared this design which should get you well upon your way.

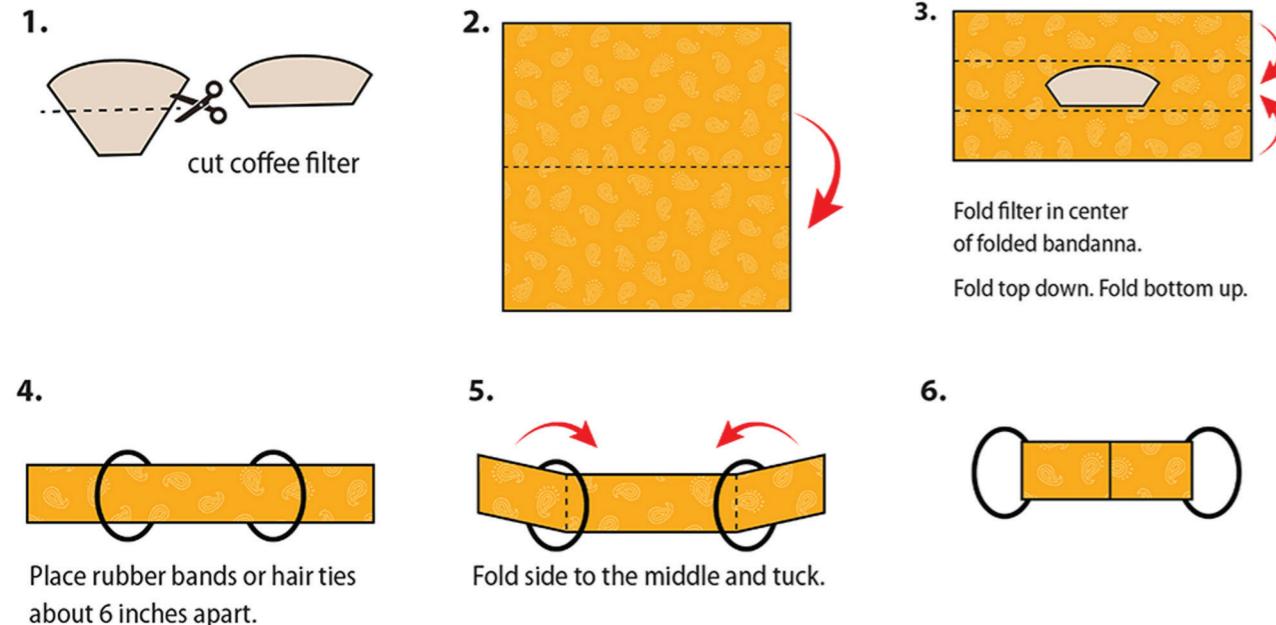
This pattern is simple, reduces waste and only uses 2 10" x 8" pieces of 100% cotton and 2 38" strips of twill tape - tho you can also use shoelace material or whatever material will tie securely, but can also be untied. »



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEWING MASK

1. Cut two pieces of 10" x 8" fabric.
2. With right sides together, overlock long sides (10").
3. Turn right side out/serged seams on the interior.
4. Overlock both open ends.
5. Fold serged ends over to create a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " casing for the twill tape.
6. Cut twill tape at 39". Mark twill tape at 18", 3", 18". At the first mark, leaving an 18" tail at the top of the casing, fold casing over the twill tape, tack casing in place and sew  $\frac{1}{8}$ " of an inch seam allowance (middle of serged edge) for entire length of casing -- stop at end, pull twill tape to the 3" mark, tack at 3" mark, leaving 18" of twill tape at opposite end. Pulling will gather the mask.
7. Repeat step 5 on other side.

Finally, even if you don't have the skills to make a mask you should not go unprotected! The best method I've encountered for a no sew mask is via folder over a bandanna and using some bobble to attack to your ear, some people have been using a



coffee filter or similar in the centre bit tho this addition should me utilised respective of breathability.

Remember whatever kind of mask you are using you should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing your face mask and wash hands immediately after removing. Washing them in a washing machine between uses, and I do mean between uses, like daily. Do not use the same mask day in day out as they'll simply become the vector by which you are infected. ■

You can get involved with the 3D printing efforts here: [www.3dcrowd.uk](http://www.3dcrowd.uk)

You'll find the fundraiser here:  
[www.gofundme.com/f/3dcrowd-emergency-3d-printed-face-shields](http://www.gofundme.com/f/3dcrowd-emergency-3d-printed-face-shields)

Check in with your local makers and mutual aid groups to find out whose making masks, who needs them and how you can help. Remember right now it's all about supporting the healthcare workers and key workers in general.

**Massive respect to everyone making PEE!**

# MAKE A BANNER HANG IT ON YOUR HOUSE



[www.tinyurl.com/lockdownbanners](http://www.tinyurl.com/lockdownbanners)

# MUTUAL AID VS COVID-19 SOLIDARITY T-SHIRTS

Winners of the design competition these three T-shirts are sold with all profits going directly to Mutual Aid groups to help them keep supporting their communities by running errand, delivering food and keeping people connected.



£15  
AVAILABLE FROM  
[WWW.PUNX.UK](http://WWW.PUNX.UK)

You can find out more information about mutual aid groups at:  
[www.freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list](http://www.freedomnews.org.uk/covid-19-uk-mutual-aid-groups-a-list)

[www.covidmutualaid.org](http://www.covidmutualaid.org)



**FREEDOM**  
**CLASS WAR**

**Bookfair 2020**  
Anarchist Bookfair in London

**SEDITIONIST**

**AUTONOMOUS  
DESIGN GROUP**

## CORONAVIRUS YOUR RIGHTS AS A WORKER

### HEALTH & SAFETY

- Your employer has a legal duty to ensure a safe working environment, adequate health and safety information, and adequate training (Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974)
- If your workplace consists of five or more employees, employers must consult with employees on health and safety arrangements and policies (Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974)
- If your work involves significant risks (e.g. contact with people who may have coronavirus, or air or surfaces that may be contaminated with coronavirus) your employer must provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (such as adequate masks or gloves) to reduce the potential risk of harm when it cannot be reduced by other means (PPE Regulations, 2018)
- You have the right to refuse dangerous work (Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974)
- If your employer dismisses you for refusing to work in 'serious and imminent circumstances of danger' or for taking reasonable steps to protect others from danger, this would constitute unfair dismissal (Section 100 [d])

### SICK PAY

- If you work (and aren't self-employed), you are legally entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) of £94.25 per week paid to you through your employer. (Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act, 1992) You can claim SSP as long as you have:
  1. Started work with your employer
  2. Earn on average at least £118 pw (before tax)
  3. Followed your employer's rules on sick pay (if no clear rules, notify your employer within 7 days)
- Some employers pay additional, contractual sick pay – this will be set out in the terms of your contract of employment
- If you take time off work due to Coronavirus, you can claim SSP from the first day you are off. After 7 days off your employer may ask for a fit note from a doctor – soon available from NHS 111 online.

■ If you self-isolate, because you or someone in your household has symptoms of Coronavirus, you can claim SSP (and contractual sick pay if your employer offers it)

■ If you are a part-time or fixed-term worker, you are still entitled to SSP. If you are an agency or casual worker and you are working on an assignment when you get ill, you might be entitled to SSP until that assignment ends. If you have already agreed to another assignment, you might be entitled to SSP till the end of that future assignment

■ If you're on a zero-hours contract, you can still get SSP as long as you earn more than £118 a week on average

### WORK CLOSURES

- If your employer wants to make you take obligatory holiday, they must tell you at least twice as many days before as the amount of days they need you to take (e.g if they want you to take five days holiday they must give you at least ten days notice)
- If your employer starts a lay-off, you are legally entitled to full pay unless your contract states otherwise
- If your contract states that you are not entitled to pay when laid off you can claim guarantee pay. The maximum you can get is £29 a day for 5 days in any 3-month period – so a maximum of £145.
- If you're not an employee, for example, if you're a temp, you don't have a right to paid work and so will not be paid if you are laid-off.
- Employers are only able to implement lay-offs or short time working if they have an express contractual right to do so or if, in the absence of an express contractual right, only if the employee agrees to it. ■

**TROUBLE AT WORK? WE WANT TO HELP:**  
[oxfordworkerjustice@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordworkerjustice@gmail.com)

**OXFORD WORKER JUSTICE**  
[www.oxfordworkerjustice.co.uk](http://www.oxfordworkerjustice.co.uk)

## IT'S HAPPENING NOW

**This situation is, quite simply,  
unsustainable.**

**We did not start this movement.**

We started this organization after we saw working class people launch a wave of labor strike and rent strike actions across the world in response to the severe negligence of our "leaders" as the pandemic has emerged. We were inspired into action by the workers and tenants and debtors who have already begun fighting and the hundreds of mutual aid systems which have spontaneously popped up everywhere.

**We do not own this movement.**

Working class individuals and organizations own this movement. Workers who are frightened about the future and ready to start empowering themselves own this movement. Labor unions and tenant unions and worker groups own this movement. If you are suffering right now, we want you to own this movement. We're just here to help.

**We are not leaders.**

We are a support group. Our goal is to help guide individuals to organizations, tools, and strategies they can use to self-organize and self-empower. We are here to signal boost, fund raise, and coordinate established groups. We are here to bolster and reinforce collective action and mutual aid networks that already exist, and to get all these entities coordinated so we can maximize the effectiveness of the working class.

Ready to get involved? Contact us now!

**You Are Not Alone.**

We are working to unite workers from across the USA and around the world to stand up and fight for our own lives—**from the safety of our own homes.**



### NO WORK

**Don't risk your life for your companies profits.**

### NO RENT

**Every human deserves shelter, especially now.**

### NO DEBT

**Nobody should be worrying about bills in a pandemic.**

GenStrike.org is a grassroots platform for activist mobilization centered around a simple goal: foster the circumstances needed to mobilize a General Strike. We formed out of a broader movement, inspired by spontaneous strikes and mutual aid networks arising all over the world. We are not here to lead, own, steer, or direct this movement. We are here to support, foster, encourage, signal boost, and materially aid this movement.

Specifically, we seek to support individuals by introducing workers to organizations and information that will help them to self-organize and to support organizations that protect the working class. We hope to encourage organized growth, development, and unity among the working class by signal boosting workers' efforts, helping with organizational techniques and fundraising, directing individuals to their organizations, and by providing them with a framework, tools, and assistance for coordinating activities and helping to establish networks of mutual aid.

We consider the "working class" to include any person who is subservient to existing private power structures. This includes any person who collects wages, the retired, the homeless, the poor, the disabled, and all other human beings who lack material security or democratic command of their own destiny.

We stand against any undemocratic power structure which allows one group of people to exploit and dominate another. ■

## General Strike Against Covid-19 and the Social Virus

**By working under** emergency conditions to support the needs of our communities or by removing ourselves from the machinery and demands of market capitalism entirely through self isolation we have all now become humanitarians. At no other time in living memory have so many people withdrawn their labour at any one time and this crisis has demonstrated our capacity for solidarity and mutual aid, but also our potential for economic disruption. As markets plummet (despite predictably outrageous bailouts to banks and corporations) and as states rush to pass Orwellian emergency powers to control and surveil us, Coronavirus has also inadvertently confirmed economists' worst nightmares. As the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) organiser Bill Haywood once claimed "If the workers are organized all they have to do is to put their hands in their pockets and they have got the capitalist class whipped." What this pandemic has proven is that without the participation of mass labour in the means of production, capitalism can be collapsed.

By removing unnecessary work to stifle the spread of Coronavirus, it is the suits and CEO's who now have the bullshit jobs and it is the poor, the migrants and the 'unskilled' who are essential to our lives and our communities. The world has been turned upside down and many now realise it was the wrong way round all along.

These are dangerous realisations and those in power will do everything they can to put things back the way it was.

Business as usual meant turning a blind eye as we left millions to die of preventable causes because it was profitable. It meant letting a handful of corporations pollute our air and water and devastate the ecosystems we rely on. It meant being told on a daily basis that your struggle to put food on the table, get a roof over your head, to access healthcare and social services, was

unimportant. You just didn't work hard enough, doing your 12 hour shift as a nurse, standing all day long on the production line, harvesting food in the hot sun or risked your safety every time you made a delivery on packed roads. Those in power will no doubt want to cut their losses from the last month's profit losses, putting us into even worse conditions than before and eroding what few rights we currently have. For the millions of us who have been made unemployed by the current crisis, a capitalist future looks very bleak indeed.

For all of us then, the return of "better times" is an invitation to our own destruction. So yes, we will meet again. But we will not die for capitalism! We are already seeing the first signs of the struggle to come.

Today in Massachusetts (6th April) 13,000 construction workers are set to strike from their work that "poses an immediate threat of harm to the health and safety of my members and the public."

In the Amazon warehouses thousands of workers are going out on strike because the multi Billionaire Jeff Bezos puts his staff and those close to them into harm's way every day but not taking adequate precautions or providing protective equipment and clean facilities that could save lives. When these same workers, risking their health for Bezos profits, attempt to get things changed they are punished. Under these conditions workers have no choice but to strike and directly shut down operations, for it is a fight to protect the welfare of their colleagues, friends and family.

This is the same story for thousands more fast food workers, cleaners, sanitation workers and couriers who have walked out of their workplaces in protest over the termination of fellow employees, for better protection from Coronavirus and for less grueling conditions. Likewise, renters have taken matters into their own hands and demanded that rent payments be frozen or they will withhold rent. How can the landlords or the government expect us to

pay rent when we cannot work? The call for rent strikes has been taken up by communities all over the world and more streets and postcodes are organising every day. Meanwhile in communities across the globe there has been a massive upsurge of mutual aid groups and direct action as people look to each other and not the state or corporations for solutions to the problems we face in our new daily reality.

The old rallying cry of "An injury to one is an injury to all" seems more true today during this pandemic than at any other time in history. Across all those parts of the economy still operating workers and tenants are standing up for our rights and dignity against a system driven solely by profits and exploitation.

These rumblings of discontent against the status quo are bound to get louder, more creative and better organised in the coming weeks and still we need to be ready to intensify and collectivise our struggles because once this crisis has passed the leviathan will be waiting for us to finish the job.

The most powerful and disruptive form of this desired intensification would be the general strike of workers across all industries.

While the general strike has never been the only tool at the workers disposal, in our current situation it is by far the most effective way we have to respond to the negligence of our "leaders" and their collapsing system. Unions in Italy have already forced their government to act by declaring that they would call a general strike if nonessential economic activity was not stopped. Agitation and mobilization for a generalised rent, debt and labour strike is already taking place in America (#NotDying4WallStreet) demanding the US government guarantee paid leave for all non-essential workers through the duration of the pandemic, as well as personal protective equipment and hazard pay for all essential workers alongside the suspension of rent, loan payments, utility payments, and interest until workers can safely return to employment. The seeds of mass action are now also growing in the UK's workers movement through direct

struggles and autonomous organisation; despite the shameful complacency of the TUC unions and the Labour Party.

Without a general strike being called by the TUC unions, such a mobilization is not unachievable but relies upon participants organising from the grassroots in their workplaces and communities to build strong class solidarity, mutual aid networks and strike committees to support each other. The tools for such organising are easy to learn and fighting unions such as the IWW or groups like Earth Strike can offer training, resources and support for new workplace organisers.

Not only is the general strike an essential tool for fighting back during the Coronavirus pandemic and to defend against the coming storm of austerity and disaster capitalism but it must in this case be used as a simultaneously destructive and constructive force to shape the new world that we wish to build from the ashes of the old. Covid-19 is a class war. It is not the rich on the front lines of the fight against Coronavirus, or who are suffering the most, but the working class. Once again those in power are sending us into battle, into the fire to defend their system from destruction. This time however, once the battle is won we must turn our weapons against the system itself. ■

## Power to the workers and victory to the strike committees!

### Organizing Guide:

[www.libcom.org/files/Organise.pdf](http://www.libcom.org/files/Organise.pdf)

### IWW Organizing Manual:

[www.network23.org/wsol/files/2013/10/IWW-organizing-manual.pdf](http://www.network23.org/wsol/files/2013/10/IWW-organizing-manual.pdf)

### Rentstrike2020:

[www.rentstrike2020.org/take-action](http://www.rentstrike2020.org/take-action)

### Mutual Aid Resources:

[www.itsgoingdown.org/autonomous-groups-are-mobilizing-mutual-aid-initiatives-to-combat-the-coronavirus](http://www.itsgoingdown.org/autonomous-groups-are-mobilizing-mutual-aid-initiatives-to-combat-the-coronavirus)

# Towards a General Strike to End the COVID-19 Crisis and Create a New World

## A CALL TO ACTION FROM COOPERATION JACKSON

The **COVID-19 pandemic** is changing the world before our very eyes. In less than 3 months, it has exposed the grotesque nature of the capitalist system to millions, ground the world economy to a halt, and revealed how truly interconnected our little planet really is.

As bad as this crisis is on its own terms, it is made considerably worse by the misleadership from the White House, Congress, and many state and local governments. President Trump not only failed to heed the advice of the state's intelligence services regarding the potential threat of the coronavirus, but he downplayed its severity for months as well, and has refused to mobilize the vast resources at the disposal of the US government to address the crisis. He continues to deny the science and proven medical advice, and is now threatening to retract social distancing orders and call for everyone to return to work by the end of April. A bipartisan Congress just passed the largest corporate bailout in history, which provided paltry relief to most working people in the form of a one-time payoff that won't even cover most people's rent and utilities for a month. The Governors of Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia have refused to shut their states down and give clear stay-at-home orders to halt the spread of the virus. And the Federal Reserve is doing everything it can to protect Wall Street, in total disregard of the real-time needs of millions of people. If Trump and his political allies in government, Wall

Street, and the corporations are successful in forcing a considerable number of workers to go back to work before the pandemic has been brought under control, it will turn into an outright calamity in the US. We cannot afford to let this happen.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Disaster capitalism and white supremacy are running amok. The Trump alliance of the neo-fascist right, combined with sectors of finance capital, the fossil fuel industry, and the religious right are exploiting this crisis to accelerate climate change, reshape society, and redefine the geopolitical order. In the midst of this pandemic, they have eliminated critical environmental protection standards (reducing already poor air quality, giving new, horrible life to the Black Lives Matter slogan borne of Eric Garner's murder, "I cant breathe" as millions struggle for air). Trump has eliminated various health and safety standards to protect workers and consumers, undermining unions and other working-class organizations. He has allowed genetically modified plants to be unleashed in protected lands, expanded roundup and deportation operations, and refused to provide adequate medical treatment of federal prisoners. Brutal bipartisan sanctions on Iran and Venezuela currently prevent millions of poor and working-class people from accessing critical life-saving resources, and US intervention has blocked Venezuela from receiving an IMF loan to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Right now, the federal response is being driven by finance ministers and corporations, rather than the medical experts and front-line workers directly addressing the response to the pandemic, abandoning the potential power of a coordinated federal response. All of this is just a sample of the crimes against humanity unfolding daily at the hands of the White House.

Despite the asymmetry of power between ourselves on the Left and the organized working-class, and the forces of the right, we have to do everything we can to intervene. We must stop the worst most deadly version of this pandemic from becoming a reality, and we have to ensure that we never return to the society that enabled this pandemic to emerge and have the impact it is having in the first place. We must do everything that we can to create a new, just, equitable and ecologically regenerative economy.

The question is: how?

We must send a clear message that things cannot and will not go back to "normal." In order to do this, we need to call for collective work and shopping stoppages, leading to a general strike that is centered around clear, comprehensive demands. We must make demands that will transform our broken and inequitable society, and build a new society run by and for us – the working-class, poor, oppressed majority.

A general strike cannot be organized through online campaigns alone, or as the result of the mere expression of a desire or even great need for a general strike. A general strike is not organized through a list of demands, though demands are necessary.

In order for a general strike to not only take place right now, but also be effective, we need to develop a broad united front organized around short-term and long-term aims. We need to assess connections between unions of all sorts and organized labor, and begin reaching out to other poor and working-class people from within our places of work, our places of living, our places of worship, and our places of leisure.

A general strike will also take resources to sustain. We cannot count on capital to support

this effort; they will attack and undermine us at every turn. Thus, we are going to have to call for (and reply upon) our collective resources. This includes our own individual purchasing power, but also the mobilization of the collective resources at the disposal of our unions, civic organizations, mutual aid, and spiritual institutions. We need to make sure that we can provide aid to workers on the front lines of the health struggle, and the front lines of the supply chain struggles. This means providing mutual aid where warranted, as well as strike funds to support workers from losing their homes, cars, medical care, and other essential expenses. Those with the most experience in organizing strikes of all sorts – both young and old – must step up in this moment and provide general insights and strategies that can be utilized by the united front in tandem with organized labor groups that are on the same page, and these insights in addition to strategy must inform an open information campaign that not only brings attention to strike efforts, but brings in supporters from outside of our organized formations who can then employ a wide range of strategies to begin initiating mass actions without feeling isolated.

The capitalists and landlords win when we are divided, fearful, and/or fighting our own battles in isolation. All it takes is enough of us breaking for them to have their way. We stand a much better chance coordinating nationally and internationally, and with organizing networks and infrastructure that are fortified with centuries' worth of cumulative experience between the organizers who comprise them. We also stand a better chance with global attention. Those who control the land, the property, and the businesses want you to believe that this COVID-19 crisis is going to blow over soon, and that everyone will simply go back to work. »

They want you to believe that things will return to "normal" within a matter of months, and even weeks. Right now, poor and working-class people have an opportunity to make it clear to the ruling classes that not only was "normal" abnormal to begin with, but that we are not going to settle for a return to the social and economic conditions that created this pandemic to begin with.

We should take inspiration in the fact that we are not alone in calling for and acting upon a call for a general strike. Workers throughout the country and the world are spontaneously taking matters into their own hands. Auto workers, chicken factory workers, nurses, drivers, grocery store workers, and more are all taking independent action. Calls for a rent strike are going viral, as working poor and homeless workers are starting to occupy hundreds of vacant homes to meet their needs and practice the necessary social distancing to ensure their survival. Things are in motion and we need to build upon this momentum quickly.

### **THIS CRISIS CHANGES EVERYTHING**

We have an opportunity to take control now, and we are ready to fight for a society in which all people can live with full autonomy without having to worry about survival. Below is the basic framing and list of preliminary demands that we think are essential to call for and act upon at this time.

### **GENERAL STRIKE! No Work, No Shopping: Friday, May 1st**

People over Profit: Tell the Government and Wall Street that their priority must be to Save Lives, Not Profits. Returning to Work under this Pandemic is a threat to our Collective Health and Safety



We Need Systems Change, Not Just Relief and Reform. The Capitalist System Can't Resolve this Crisis.

#### **Our Demands**

- Protect all front-line workers in the hospitals, the supply chains, and the farms and fields to ensure that they have all of the equipment and disinfectant materials that they need to keep themselves and the general public healthy
- Protect Asians and other vulnerable communities, including the homeless, migrants, and refugees from discrimination and attack in this time of crisis
- Democratize the means of production, convert the corporations and workplaces into cooperatives to produce what we need and distribute equitably according to need institute universal health care now
- Institute universal basic services now (education, childcare, elderly care, water, electricity, internet, etc.) based on economic, social, and cultural rights guidelines
- Institute universal basic income now
- Democratize the finance, credit, and insurance industries – Bail out the people, not the corporations and Wall Street
- Decarbonize the economy, institute a Green New Deal based on a just transition, end the fossil fuel and extractive industries now
- Housing is a human right, decommodefy housing now, open all available housing stock to those who need it now
- Ensure there is clean drinking water for all communities, decommodefy water now Cancel our debts, institute a debt jubilee now Close the jails, close the prisons, release the prisoners
- Close the detention centers, reunite the families, stop the raids and deportations
- Close all of the overseas military bases, cut the military (defense) and spy (surveillance) budgets and redirect these funds to health care, social services, universal basic income and greening public infrastructure and the economy

**We are calling upon all who agree with this call to join us in calling for militant action to shut the system down.**

**This is what we are asking you to do immediately:**

- Let us know if you agree with this call and this list of demands, or how you would add upon or strengthen them.

■ Let us know if you would be willing to participate in a coordinating body to help organize and advance this call. This coordinating body would take on the task of building out the base of the united front, help facilitate community between its constituent parts, and facilitate the calls to action.

■ Join us to start building this front and advancing this call to action.

To participate and communicate your alignment and willingness to help coordinate a broad, united front initiative email us at [GenStrike2020@protonmail.com](mailto:GenStrike2020@protonmail.com).

Finally, this initiative is not intended to negate any of the calls already issued for a rent strike, a people's bailout, etc. We hope to unite all who can be united, while respecting the independence of initiative of the various forces that would comprise the front. We have to apply ceaseless, unyielding pressure on the system and the forces that enable it. Let's do so with any eye towards employing maximum unity to end this crisis and create a new world in its aftermath. ■

- Cooperation Jackson



**Cooperation Jackson is a cooperative network based in Jackson, Mississippi. It consists of four interconnected and interdependent institutions: a federation of local worker cooperatives, a cooperative incubator, a cooperative education and training center, and a cooperative bank.**

[www.cooperationjackson.org](http://www.cooperationjackson.org)

## Is this the time for a Rent Strike?

"The fact that there are a bunch of people suddenly interested in a #rentstrike who have no experience with orthodox organizing isn't a mark of spontaneism or ultraleftism or some moral failure to have been previously involved in orthodox organizing. It's a mark of the fact that shifting material conditions have presented that strategy as one that combines a) survival & b) newly increased leverage. New conditions mean new modes of organization rather than stamping your foot and insisting on the old kind."

-Joshua Clover

"But I can't possibly evict all of them at once!"

*-Apparently, a landlord seeking advice via an online forum after receiving letters from each of the 32 tenants in "his" building declaring their intention to rent strike. March 25th, 2020, Houston, TX*



**Station 40**, a housing collective in San Francisco, is already on rent strike as we publish this.

that has advanced with alarming speed and the totalitarian response from the state that puts us in a new situation. While the police enjoy their new powers, many people have lost their jobs and many more already have no idea how they are going to make it to the end of the month. In this context, disobedient voices are emerging and the idea of a rent strike has gained traction. We at Editorial Segadores and Col·lectiu Bauma have wanted to investigate this kind of strike, reviewing some famous past examples and imagining what a rent strike might look like in the coronavirus era. We hope that these reflections help whoever is interested in strategizing and acting. In response to confinement—critical thought and direct action.

### What Is a Rent Strike and How Does It Work?

A rent strike is when a group of renters decide collectively to stop paying rent. They might have the same landlord or live in the same neighborhood. This might occur within another campaign or as part of a bigger struggle, or it might be the principle axis of a struggle against gentrification, against insufferable living conditions, against poverty in general, against capitalism itself.

To succeed, a rent strike requires three elements:

**1. Shared dissatisfaction.** At the beginning, even if neighbors haven't collectivized their demands, it's necessary that many of them perceive the situation in more or less the same way: that it is outrageous or intolerable, that they run the risk of losing access to their housing, and that they don't trust the established channels to provide justice.

**2. Outreach.** As we'll see below, the vast majority of rent strikes begin with a relatively small group of people and grow from there. Therefore, they need the means to spread their call to action, communicate their complaints, and ask for support and solidarity. In many cases, strikers can win with only a third of the renters of a property participating in a rent strike, but

sufficient outreach is necessary to get to these numbers and to make the threat that the strike will spread convincing.

**3. Support.** Those who go on strike need support. They need legal support for court procedures, housing support for those who lose their homes, physical support to fight evictions, and strategic support to face repression on a larger scale. In many cases, especially in large strikes, striking renters have found all the support they require within their own ranks, supporting one another and creating the necessary structures to survive. In other cases, strikers have turned to existing organizations for support. But the initiative for the strike always comes from the renters who dare to start it.



**Historic Strikes and Their Common Characteristics**

Now we'll look at how these three vital elements were achieved in major rent strikes throughout history.

#### De Freyne Estate, Roscommon, Ireland, 1901

In 1901, a rent strike broke out on the farms belonging to Baron De Freyne, a big-time landlord in Roscommon County, Ireland. Over the preceding decades, renters in the region had consolidated their organizing power against the owners of large estates, in a movement connected to the resistance against English colonialism and the effects of the Great Famine. These movements hadn't taken root in Roscommon,

but surely the inhabitants knew of the practice and had also participated in some of the semi-illegal forms of resistance that have always been a part of rural tenancy (mass meetings, physically resisting eviction, sabotage, arson).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the residents were organized under the United Irish League, a nationalist organization that dealt with agrarian and economic issues. When the inhabitants started their autonomous strike, they quickly connected with the local UIL, while other groups connected with them to support their strike. At the same time, the high-ranking leadership acted ambiguously, sometimes offering support, other times trying to frame the strike as an independent undertaking that did not reject the concepts of rental and property outright, since the leadership of the UIL were still trying to persuade some part of the owning class to join them.

The immediate causes of the strike included a torrential rain that destroyed much of the harvest and drove up the price of feed; De Freyne's refusal to lower the cost of rent; the accumulation of debt and the evictions of many families; and a long history of injustice with respect to land ownership, aggravated by a recent episode in which some of the inhabitants of a neighboring estate had been allowed to buy land while all of De Freyne's tenants were forced to keep living like serfs.

The strike got underway in November 1901. At first, many of De Freyne's tenants organized themselves clandestinely and informally, since the UIL didn't take the initiative, although it did support the tenants. The strike spread to other estates, lasting over a year. Over 90% of the tenants on De Freyne's lands participated. They resisted evictions by building barricades, throwing rocks at the police, and illegally constructing new dwellings.

All this caused a national scandal. In 1903, the English Parliament was forced to adopt extensive agrarian reform, putting an end to the system of tenant farming.»

## The Brooms Strike, Argentina, 1907

In August of 1907, the Municipality of Buenos Aires decreed a tax increase for the next year. Right away, landlords started raising rent. The conditions in poor areas were already miserable. In the prior year, the Argentine Regional Workers' Federation (FORA) had campaigned for the lowering of rent.

On September 13, the women in 137 apartments on one block initiated a spontaneous strike. They drove out the lawyers, officials, judges, and police who tried to eject the tenants. By the end of the month, more than 100,000 renters were participating in a strike led by women who organized in committees, aided by mobilizations and structures organized by the FORA. They demanded a 30% reduction in rent; when the police came to evict a tenant, they fought with all they had, throwing projectiles and fighting hand to hand.

The strike spread to other cities, including Rosario and Baía Blanca, drawing the support of various labor, anarchist, and socialist organizations, chief of which was the FORA. Police repression was intense; in one case, they murdered a young anarchist. In the end, although the strikers stopped many evictions, they did not succeed in forcing the landlords to reduce the cost of rent. After three months of fierce battles and the deportation of many organizers (like Virginia Bolten) under the Law of Residence, the struggle ran out of steam.

## Manhattan Rent Strike, New York, 1907

Between 1905 and 1907, rents in New York City rose 33%. The city grew without stopping, swelling with poor immigrants who came to work in the factories, in construction, and at the port. There was also a surge of anarchist and socialist activity. In the fall, landlords announced another rise in rents. In response, Pauline Newman, a 20-year-old worker, Jewish immigrant, and socialist, took the initiative, convincing 400 other young women workers to support the call for a rent strike. Already,

by the end of December, they had convinced thousands of families; in the new year, 10,000 families stopped paying, demanding a 18-20% rent reduction. Within a few weeks, some 2000 families saw their rent reduced. This event was the beginning of a few years of neighborhood struggle and eventual state control over rent.

## Mrs. Barbour's Army, Glasgow, 1915

In the years preceding 1915, the Scottish city of Glasgow grew rapidly with wartime industrialization and the immigration of rural families. The property-owning class speculated on housing, leaving 11% of houses vacant and not financing new construction, while the working class found themselves in ever more crowded and deteriorating homes. Organizations such as the Scottish Housing Council and various labor unions spent years working to execute legal reforms in the housing and renting sector; they won some new laws, but in general, the situation continued to worsen. Furthermore, with the Great War, the prices of food rose without stopping and many of the country's men were abroad. The property owners took advantage, thinking that it would be easier to exploit poor families with their men gone. From August to September 1913, there were 484 evictions in Glasgow. From January to March 1915, there were 6441.

In the misery, exploitation, and carnage that persecuted the working class, the property owners of Glasgow saw a good opportunity. In February 1915, they announced a 25% price increase for all rentals. Immediately, on February 16, all of the poor women in the southern part of the Govan neighborhood held a mass meeting. In attendance were the organizers of Glasgow Women's Housing Association, an organization that had formed the previous year but still had little traction. At the meeting, they created the South Govan Women's Housing Association, affiliated with GWHA. They decided not to pay the increase, but instead to continue paying the original rate. This spread throughout the neighborhood.

GWHA called a rally for May 1, drawing 20,000 participants. In June, the women of Govan won the cancellation of the rent increase. The movement grew from there. In October, more than 30,000 people participated in the rent strike all over the city. They came to be known as Mrs. Barbour's Army, named after Mary Barbour, a worker of Govan. In the course of spreading and maintaining the strike, they organized rallies and protests and defended tenants against evictions, fighting hand to hand with the police. The unions threatened to go on strike in the armament factories; at the end of the year, they succeeded in winning the suspension of any punitive action against strikers, a rent freeze maintaining pre-war rent prices, and the first rent control laws in the United Kingdom—an important step towards social housing, which was introduced not long after.

From early on, the movement won the support of leftist parties and other existing organizations that focused on housing, like the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, connected with the Socialist Party. But it's important to highlight that the women created autonomous organizations rather than joining traditional organizations. Some, like Mary Burns Laird, the first president of GWHA, also organized with political parties (the Labor party, in the case of Laird), while others, like Mrs. Barbour, weren't affiliated with any party, creating their own path for the struggle. In any case, the GWHA's activity was far from traditional leftist politics: their meetings took place in their kitchens, in washhouses, and in the streets. In large part, the force behind the acronym was the solidarity network that the poor women had already established in their daily caretaking activities.

## Comité de Defensa Económica, Barcelona, 1931

In 1931, Barcelona had recently emerged from dictatorship. People eagerly awaited the improvements that democracy would bring...

and they kept waiting. Barcelona had become the most expensive city in Europe, with rent amounting to 30%-40% of wages. (Today's figures are similar, or even worse, but at the time, the average in European cities was 15%.) Conditions were abysmal. Many who could not afford to rent a place for themselves went to the "Casas de Dormir," rooms where they could rest between factory shifts; often, these rooms didn't even have beds, just ropes on which workers could rest their arms.

A rent strike erupted in April with the participants demanding a 40% reduction in rent. It lasted until December, involving between 45,000 and 100,000 people throughout the city. The Comité de Defensa Económica (CDE), or Economic Defense Committee, founded by the construction union of the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, National Confederation of Workers), played a crucial role in the coordination and spread of the strike.

Like so many other strikes, this one was characterized by solidarity among striking neighbors who built barricades and resisted evictions together. When they succeeded, they celebrated in the street; when they did not, they broke back into the evicted house and celebrated inside. The very same workers who shut off the water or electricity in the morning came back in the evening to turn it back on. They were, of course, affiliated with the CNT. Sometimes the police ended up throwing furniture out of the windows or otherwise destroying it, fed up with having to return to reoccupied homes. Other tactics included what is known today as escrache, that is, protests in front of a landlord's house.

Obviously, the strike didn't come out of nowhere: it was based in community traditions of autonomy and rooted in a multifaceted network of relationships and ties that grew out of neighborhood and kinship. The movement was also closely linked to the radical culture that the CNT had been fostering since World War One.»

"Santiago Bilbao, organizer of the CDE, saw the tenants' strike as an important act of economic mutual aid through which the dispossessed could counteract the power of the market and take control of their daily lives. The CDE's advice to the workers was: "Eat well and if you don't have money, don't pay rent!" The CDE also demanded that the unemployed be exempt from paying rent. However, although the strike spread through mass meetings organized by the CDE, the movement really came from the streets, which were more essential to it than any organization."

-Barcelona (1931), *Huelga de Inquilinos*

"The rent strike was born in the neighborhood of Barceloneta where there is a vital social consciousness, both from the hard lives of fishermen and from the laborers who work in the Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, one of the most important companies in the metal industry. It's no surprise that these grievances emerged from this historic fishing neighborhood next to the Mediterranean, where fishermen's houses are still known as matchboxes. These were homes of 15 or 20 square meters where whole families lived, sometimes with lodgers such as relatives recently arrived from the village. [...] It is the Sindicato Único de la Construcción of the CNT that will mobilize the discontent of working families, which, little by little, will spread to the margins of the city and in each of those neighborhoods, the strike will have its own characteristics, its own idiosyncrasies and methods of struggle."

-Aisa Pàmpols, Manel, (2014) "La huelga de alquileres y el comité de defensa económica," Barcelona, abril-diciembre de 1931. Sindicato de la Construcción de la CNT. Barcelona: El Lokal.

The strike was effectively ended by means of severe repression, headed by governor Oriol Anguera de Sojo and the president of the Property Owners Association, Joan Pich i Son, who also killed the insurrection of October



**St. Pancras, London, 1959-1960**

1934. The new democratic republic did not look much different from the old dictatorship once it brought out its entire arsenal: police, Guardia Civil (Civil Guard), and the Guardia de Asalto, the new paramilitary police. The Law of the Defense of the Republic was applied, a gag law that offered carte blanche for repression. Some were imprisoned as "governmental prisoners" and the CDE was declared a criminal organization.

Despite all this, the continued protests continued to stoke the embers for the revolution that was to come.

Much of the original documentation of the strike was destroyed in the war, perhaps as a result of the fear inspired by this example of proletarian resistance. Consequently, we are missing a large portion of the voices of the women who played a central role in the strike. Formal organizations are always given more weight in historiography than informal organizational spaces, although there is no doubt that the central role of the CNT was an important feature of the strike. However, the fact that strike tactics were different in each neighborhood tells us that the strike was not centralized, but depended above all on the initiative of those who carried it out.

St. Pancras, in London, was a mostly working-class area, with some 8000 people living in social housing.

In 1958, the district voted to raise the rent in social housing. At the end of the following July, after the Conservative Party won the district elections, they raised rents again, this time more dramatically (between 100% and 200%), and kicked out the unions (whereas previously, workers in the district had to be members). Up to that point, there had been little neighborhood organization, but as August began, tenants in one district neighborhood formed an association. By the end of August, 25 such tenant associations had been formed and these had representatives in the central committee of a new organization, the United Tenants Association. The secretary, Don Cook, had already been secretary of one of the few (and small) tenant associations that existed before 1959.

From the beginning, most of the base favored direct action and a rent strike, but the Labor Party, which wanted to use the tenants' demands to beat the Conservative Party and regain control in the district, held them back.

On September 1, 1959, a march and meeting took place involving 4000 people. The participants adopted positions including a refusal to fill out the required paperwork to evaluate each family's new rent, a call for unity, a promise to defend any family facing eviction, and a demand for solidarity from the unions. Over the following months, the tenants continued to hold demonstrations and, with support from the unions, established committees on every block, which held weekly delegate assemblies often attended by 200 or more participants. They published three weekly newsletters to disseminate information from the leadership to the base. By the end of the year, the UTA included 35 tenant associations.

Women protested by night at the homes of district counselors. Each counselor was targeted twice a week or more. They lost plenty of sleep. One of the few stories of the strike written by a participant (one Dave Burn) recognizes that women "formed the backbone of the movement, remaining active every day and supporting each other." Still, most of Burn's story focuses on formal, predominantly male delegate organizations.

The rent hike was set to take effect on January 4, 1960. At first, fully 80% of social housing tenants didn't pay the increase, only the previous rent. After many threats and with the district's eviction process beginning, participation in the strike dropped to a quarter of all tenants, or about 2000. In February, the Labor Party advised the UTA to call off the strike so they could negotiate with the Conservatives. The UTA refused: without the strike, they would be totally defenseless and several families were already in the midst of eviction processes.

To concentrate their forces, the UTA organized a collective payment of most of the back rent so they didn't have to fight so many evictions at once. The first judgments were issued and three evictions were scheduled for late August. Tenants began to organize their defense, determined not to allow a single eviction from social housing. »

In the middle of that campaign, in July, UTA leaders met with district counselors—but the negotiations failed, since the Conservatives didn't want to hear anything about tenants' problems. From that moment, the UTA began a total rent strike, and in mid-August, 250 more eviction notices arrived.

By August 28, massive barricades had been erected; tenants had prepared a system of pickets and alarms to alert the entire neighborhood, so that workers could walk out and come to defend people's homes. As of August 14, the number of eviction notices had risen to 514. The Labor Party and the Communist Party feared the rising tension and called for the strike to end, but it was too late.

On the morning of September 22, 800 cops attacked. A two-hour battle followed in which one policeman was seriously injured. Police managed to evict two homes, but on one block, the clashes continued until noon. Some 300 local workers came to help defend the strike—but the labor unions did not offer support. In the afternoon, a thousand cops attacked a march of 14,000 tenants. Confrontations continued.

The leader of the district counsel signaled that he was prepared to meet with UTA representatives. The next day, the Minister of the Interior declared the prohibition of all demonstrations and gatherings.

Due to the political scandal the riots had caused, the Labor Party abandoned the tenants and began to denounce "agitators" and "radicals." They alleged the involvement of outside provocateurs and insisted that the conflict had to be resolved through dialogue—despite the fact that throughout the year, the district's Conservatives had nearly always refused dialogue. Meanwhile, after negotiations, the Conservatives approved a small rent reduction.

Under attack as much from the left as from the right and facing daily threats of new evictions, the UTA decided to change strategies to avoid more evictions. They paid the back rent due from neighbors who faced the highest risk of

eviction and decided to aid the Labor Party to oust the Conservatives in the coming elections. In May 1961, the Labor Party won control of the district counsel, 51 counselors to 19. Several UTA delegates had joined their ranks and the main plank of their electoral platform was rent reform.

Tenants awaited the reform of the rental plan in social housing... and waited... and waited. The two tenants who had been evicted found new homes, but after a few months, Labor counselors announced that rent reform would not be possible. The strike had failed.

### **Autoriduzione, Italy, 1970s**

The 1960s and '70s in Italy were a time of increasing precarity in labor and housing, and also a moment in which people dreamed of a world without exploitation and dared to pursue it. In 1974, counting on the neutrality of the Communist Party, the most forward-thinking technocrats of the industrial and financial sectors introduced Plan Carli. This Plan aimed to increase labor exploitation and reduce public spending.

During the 1960s, a strong autonomous workers movement in Italy had influenced the rise of an autonomous movement in the neighborhoods based in self-organized neighborhood committees in which women played a crucial role. Focused on practical and immediate survival, these committees organized "auto-reductions" in which tenants and neighbors themselves decided to reduce the price of services—for example, only paying 50% for water or electricity.

In Torino, the movement gained considerable momentum in summer 1974. When public transit companies decided to raise fares, the response was immediate. Participants spontaneously blocked buses at various points, distributed pamphlets, and sent delegates into town. From there, the most militant unions began to organize a popular response: they would print transit tickets themselves and volunteers would hand them out on buses, charging the previous price. Through collective strength, they forced the companies to accept the situation.

The auto-reductions in electricity payments spread quickly, organized in two phases: first, collecting signatures committing to participation in the auto-reduction, in both factories and neighborhoods; second, picket lines outside the post office, taking advantage of leaked information from the public utility unions about when and where bills were mailed. Picketers handed out information about how to participate in the auto-reduction. After a few weeks, 150,000 families in Torino and the Piedmont region were participating.

Auto-reductions were stronger in Torino because the regional unions were autonomous from the national committees controlled by the Communist Party, which blocked every direct action initiative against rising prices. Thus, in Torino, the labor unions could lend their power and support to spontaneous initiatives and those by neighborhood committees, while in cities such as Milan, the unions did not support those initiatives or else, as in Napoli, there were no strong unions in the first place. In some cities, like Palermo, students and young people made auto-reductions possible through illegal actions.

The movement extended to auto-reductions in rent, aiming to keep rent from exceeding 10% of a family's salary. Various tactics were employed from small group efforts to neighborhood committee initiatives backed by the more radical unions. In the first half of the 1970s, participants squatted 20,000 homes, temporarily liberating them from the commercial logic of rent. There were also rent strikes in Rome, Milan, and Torino.

The feminist movement was a major part of these efforts. In this context, women developed the theories of triple exploitation (by bosses, husbands, and the state) and reproductive labor, which remain crucial in present-day struggles.

### **Soweto Township, South Africa, 1980s**

Soweto is an urban area of Johannesburg with a high population density. In the 1980s,



it had 2.5 million inhabitants. Throughout the last decades of Apartheid, the residents of Soweto experienced extreme poverty and social exclusion. In 1976, this erupted in the Soweto Uprising, a series of powerful protests and strikes and a police crackdown that ended in dozens of deaths. The material conditions of the area began to improve, but only thanks to the continued struggle of the residents.

The housing situation was appalling. Houses were of poor quality, unhygienic, and disordered. Rent and services amounted to a third of the typical salary of the residents, not counting the skyrocketing unemployment rates. On June 1, 1986, when word spread of a plan to raise rents, thousands of Soweto residents stopped paying rent and services to the Soweto Council. The Council tried to break the strike with evictions, but the neighbors resisted with force. In late August, police shot at a crowd that was resisting an eviction, killing more than 20 people. Rage intensified and the authorities halted the evictions.

In early 1988, the authorities declared a state of emergency to try to suppress the rise of black resistance across the country. The sole focal point that they did not manage to extinguish » was the Soweto rent strike. In the middle of the year, the strikes continued and the authorities cut off the electricity to nearly the entire area as a means of pressure.»

The press claimed that the strike was not realistic, that it was only sustained by the violence of young militants. The reality turned out to be different: despite 30 months of a state of emergency that stopped much of the activity of the anti-apartheid movement, the vast majority of the residents continued to support the strike. In the end, the authorities recognized that they had completely lost control. In December 1989, they canceled all overdue rents—a loss of more than \$ 100 million—definitively stopped evictions, suspended all rents pending negotiation with neighbors, and, in at least 50,000 cases, ceded ownership of the houses directly to the tenants.

Before these strikes, the anti-apartheid movement had used rent strikes as a tactic in its protests against the white government, so the entire population was familiar with them; the mobilizations and organizations of this movement had extended the practices of solidarity. But the first major rent strike started in September 1984 in Lekoa as an immediate response from the neighbors themselves to a rent increase; the most involved organization was the Vaal Civic Association, Vaal being the local region. This was probably the source of the rent strike tactic that the African National Congress (ANC) and other organizations subsequently began to use.

Similarly, the Soweto rent strike emerged from the neighborhood itself in response to its immediate conditions and survival imperatives. It is a classic example of informal neighborhood networks being key to the organization of strikes, with formal structures being created as needed once the strike had already begun. And while they were excluded from some of the formal organizations, women maintained a key role in organizing and maintaining those vital neighborhood networks.

### **Boyle Heights Mariachis, Los Angeles, 2017**

In an attempt at racist gentrification, a homeowner raised rental costs by 60-80% on a small number of apartments in a building next to Mariachi Plaza in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. Half of the tenants formed a coalition

immediately—including tenants not directly affected by the rent increase—and demanded dialogue with the landlord. When the landlord tried to engage with each of them separately, the coalition launched the rent strike. Subsequently, the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU) began supporting the strike, helping to mobilize and secure legal resources.

After nine months, they received a rent hike of only 14%, a three-year contract (very rare in the US), the cancellation of any penalty for non-payment, and the right to negotiate the next contract as a collective after three years.

### **Burlington United, Los Angeles, 2018**

A strike began in three buildings on the same property on Burlington Avenue, a Latinx neighborhood in Los Angeles affected by rapid gentrification, at a moment when the number of homeless Latinx people had been skyrocketing. When the landlord raised tenants' rent between 25% and 50%, 36 of the 192 apartments declared a rent strike; the poor conditions in the buildings were also one of the complaints shared by

the tenants. By the second week, a total of 85 apartments were on strike, almost half. The residents organized themselves starting with the strike declaration. Subsequently, the local LATU and a nearby neighborhood legal defense activist organization opposing evictions provided assistance to the strikers.

The legal system divided resistance through separate court processes for each apartment. Half of the apartments won their judgments; the others were forced to leave.

### **Parkdale, Toronto, 2017-2018**

In 2017, the tenants occupying 300 apartments in multiple buildings with the same owner carried out a successful strike in the Parkdale neighborhood of Toronto. The neighborhood was undergoing rapid gentrification and the real estate company in question had already earned a bad reputation among its tenants for poor apartment conditions and trying to force them out via price increases.



When the company tried to raise prices, some neighbors decided to declare a strike; others quickly joined, organizing as an assembly. Another important element in the context was the activity of Parkdale Organize, a tenants' organization from the same neighborhood that had emerged out of another neighborhood struggle in 2015. Parkdale Organize helped mobilize the strike, knocking on doors in the affected buildings, offering resources, and sharing models of resistance. After three months, they managed to block the rent increase.

Inspired by this example, tenants in another large, 189-apartment Parkdale building began a strike the following year. When the real estate company decreed a sharp rise in rents, the tenants in 55 apartments organized in an assembly and went on strike. After two months on strike, the tenants won their demands and the owner canceled the rent increase.

### **Common Characteristics**

Most of these strikes were started by women; women played an important role in all of them. The strikes always occur in a context in which many tenants suffer similar conditions: rent that takes up a large proportion of salaries; the danger of losing housing; and some additional cause for outrage, such as very unhealthy conditions, a contextual issue like English colonialism (as in the Roscommon strike), or an unjust reform that favors some and harms others. And there is almost always a spark: most commonly, a price increase or a decrease in the economic opportunities of the tenants.

Often, strikes began spontaneously, which does not mean they appeared out of nowhere, but that they arose—in a favorable context—from the specific initiative of neighbors, implemented through an assembly or through affective and neighborhood networks. From there, they either create their own organizations or draw the support of existing organizations. In other cases, a formal organization exists from the beginning of the strike, but it is a rather small organization created by and for tenants, »

not one of the big union organizations or parties. We have only found one case in which a rent strike was called for by a large organization—1931 in Barcelona.

Regarding the chances of victory, it is important for the strike to spread as widely as possible, but it isn't necessary that it involve a majority. Strikes have been won with the participation of only a quarter or a third of the tenants under the same owner; in the case of strikes in a given territory, that are not directed against a particular owner, it may be a much smaller proportion of the total inhabitants of a city, as long as there are enough to interrupt normalcy, provoke a crisis in the government, and saturate the legal system. The determination to maintain high spirits and solidarity rather than seeking individual solutions is more important than the number of strikers.

Another factor, perhaps the most important, depends on context. What are the state's capacities to inflict repression? Is it better for them to crush disobedience, or to appease conflict and restore their image?

#### **Current Conditions: More than Adequate**

As we have seen, certain conditions are necessary for a rent strike to spread throughout the population: precarity that makes it impossible for more and more people to access housing and a shared sense that things are going very badly. Do these conditions currently exist?

Increasingly, large international investment funds are buying up property around the world and setting rent at record highs. As they devour the housing market, the price that people have to pay for access skyrockets.

For example, in the Spanish state, the price of rental housing reached its historical apex in February 2020 (the last month for which the data was available at the time of writing this text) at €11.1 per square meter, an increase of 5.6% over February 2019. The communities with the highest prices are Madrid (€ 15.0) and Catalonia (€14.5). In Madrid City, the price is €16.3 per

square meter, a growth of 3.5%; and in the city of Barcelona, €16.8 per square meter, a growth of 3.7%. But all the tourist cities have experienced a similar increase. Between 2014 and 2019, the average rental prices in the Spanish state have risen 50%, far exceeding the highest point before the 2008 crisis.

Over the same time period, the average salary in the Spanish state has not even risen 3%. That's right: a 50% increase in housing costs and a 3% increase in salaries. But the mean salary includes both working people and millionaires, and the latter do not have to pay rent. If we refer to the median salary or the salary earned by the greatest number of people (i.e., the most common salary among the masses), we see that it has risen much less and has even decreased in some years. In short: now there are more people than ever who cannot access housing. We have seen this situation coming for the past five years, long before the coronavirus.

This lack of housing access shows in the statistics, as well. In 2018, there were more than 59,000 evictions in the Spanish state, with an increasing proportion of evictions for non-payment of rent. In 2019, there were more than 54,000, 70% via the Urban Rental Law. Both years, the communities of Catalonia and Andalusia led in the number of evictions. The decline between 2018 and 2019 is largely explained by the resistance to evictions that has emerged everywhere and by the trend towards fewer foreclosures each year, as fewer people can get mortgages now and banks are more willing to negotiate after the explosion of resistance over the last twelve years. Between 2017 and 2019, the number of homeless people in Madrid grew by 25%, officially reaching 2583 people, although other experts say that there must actually be around 3000. There are an estimated 40,000+ homeless people throughout the Spanish state. [In the United States, the number of homeless people in Los Angeles alone exceeds this.]

The coronavirus pandemic only exacerbates this situation. Many people have lost their jobs; it is no surprise that the government's emergency

measures have been more concerned with increasing police and martial powers, protecting financial institutions, businessmen, and people with mortgages, and therefore have left the most precarious people unprotected—tenants, people without papers, and the homeless. On the other hand, it is a time when solidarity initiatives have spread at the speed of light, with cacerolazos (noise demonstrations with pots and pans) on the balconies and a rapid expansion of social demands, all despite the state of siege imposed by the government.

In short, it is not just the right time for a rent strike, but there is more need than ever to organize such initiatives right now. If this is not the time—all-time highs for housing precarity, a pandemic, and the rapid spread of social initiatives—perhaps there will never be a suitable time to launch a rent strike?

#### **Tenants' Concerns**

It is understandable that renters who might be in favor of going on strike will have a number of doubts.

#### **Practical and Legal Concerns**

Initial doubts stem, simply, from a total lack of familiarity with rent strikes: to our knowledge, there has been no rent strike in Spanish territory since 1931. How does it work? What are my rights and what are the possible penalties if I stop paying the rent?

In short, you only have to do two things to join the rent strike: stop paying and communicate it to others. You can communicate your non-payment to the owner or not do so. Communicating it may make the strike stronger, but if several tenants of the same owner join the strike, that will also convey the message. The Union of Tenants of Gran Canaria has an example of a form that you can send to the owner.

The second step is very important: informing others that you have joined the rent strike. The more people join, the less danger there is for each

person. Talking to your neighbors is the best way to encourage them to join the strike. It is also very important to communicate about the strike to networks that can provide solidarity in your neighborhood. These could be neighborhood associations, housing or tenant unions, or even solidarity-based labor unions such as the CNT. If they know more or less how many people are on strike, they will be able to distribute information and resources and help organize a collective defense in the event of an eviction process. Remember: together, we are much stronger.

As for the legal consequences, if you stop paying the rent, the landlord may start an eviction process to kick you out of your apartment. But in many cases, when multiple tenants of the same landlord stop paying the rent, the landlord is compelled to reach an agreement that can include a rent reduction. In a situation of generalized crisis like the current one, it is very possible that the state will intervene with a moratorium on evictions if many people go on strike.

#### **Emotional Concerns**

The emotional aspect is essential in a rent strike. Precarious housing exists everywhere, every day. The fundamental element to spark a rent strike is the courage of those who say enough is enough, who decide to take risks, to take the initiative. It is a bit of a paradox: if everyone dares, victory is almost guaranteed and there is very little risk. But if everyone hesitates, without the safety of the group, the few who dare may lose their homes.

Yet right now, we obviously have the advantage. Millions of people from humble neighborhoods are in the same situation—and we all already know that we are in this situation. There will not be "a few" who take risks, because there are already tens of thousands who have lost their jobs and will not be able to pay their rent, and this number will only increase. If we suffer in silence, we may not risk anything, but all the same we may lose our homes. But if we raise our voices and collectivize our struggle, we have everything to gain and nothing to lose. »

The slightly more privileged people—those who can survive a month, two months, three months without pay, or who have retained their jobs—also have a lot to gain if they join the thousands of people who have no other way out, because none of us know how long the quarantine will last or how long the consequent economic crisis will continue. Regardless of the pandemic, in most of the cities in the Spanish state, we were already losing access to housing. If normality returns... then tourism will return along with Airbnb, gentrification, and the unbearable pressure of ever-rising rent.

We have another advantage on our side: during the state of emergency, the courts are also paralyzed. Some cities have already postponed all evictions and other municipalities will not be able to manage them at all, or only extremely slowly.

There could not be a better time to start a rent strike. The only thing that is needed is to raise our voices and collectivize the situation that we are all experiencing.

## Organizations Specializing in the Housing Struggle

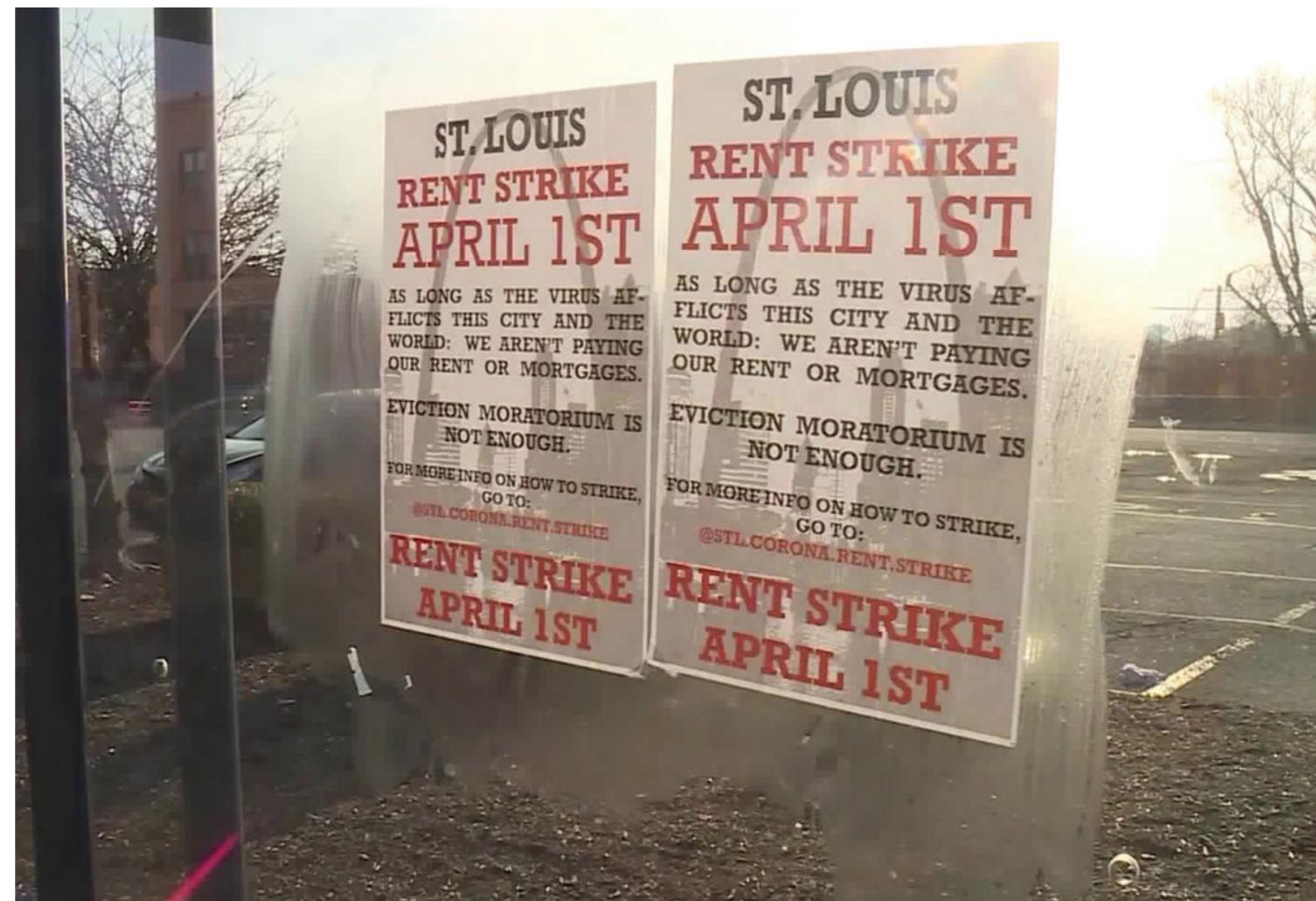
Social organizations play a very important role in a rent strike. They can convene it, they can support it—or they can damage it. What are the characteristics of a strong and effective relationship between the housing movement and organizations?

First, we must recognize the reality of movements for housing. The movement consists of everyone who suffers from poor housing conditions or who is in danger of losing access to housing. They, the precarious, are the ones who have everything to lose and everything to gain; they are the ones who have to take the initiative to declare a rent strike or other acts of resistance.

Organization is a matter of the utmost strategic importance within a rent strike, but there is no specific organization that is essential. An organization that is already very strong can

call the strike, as in Barcelona in 1931. But if the neighbors themselves need to go on strike, they will call the strike themselves and then create the organizations they need to build support and coordinate their actions. Even when organizations specializing in housing already exist, if they do not respond to the residents' immediate needs, the residents will ignore them and create their own organizations. And in the very unfortunate case that an organization considers itself the proprietor of the movement and tries to lead it according to its own political needs rather than the needs of the residents, as occurred in the strike in St. Pancras, London, in 1960, it will end up sabotaging the strike and harming the tenants.

The fact that the vast majority of rent strikes have been organized by women reflects this dynamic: the formal organizations of the Left have emerged largely according to a patriarchal logic that puts "party interests" ahead of the



human needs of the most affected people. For this reason, women often organize their own structures, among other things, within their own networks and with their own methods, rather than joining the large organizations that already exist.

A strong and effective relationship between the housing movement and social organizations could be based on these principles:

1. Social organizations respond to the needs of the residents. They can help to formulate strategies, but they should not turn a blind eye to the realities and inclinations of the residents.
2. Organizations exist to support residents, not to lead them. If the organizations assume that their leadership is essential, residents will likely have to create their own initiatives when action is urgent.

**3. The most important support structures that organizations can provide are psychosocial and defensive.** In regards to the first, the organization helps residents to see that they are not alone—that together they are strong, they can win. In this sense, the essential thing is to feed people's spirits, not to discourage them or sow fear or false prudence. As for their defensive role, this is the activity of coordinating physical resistance to evictions and gathering legal resources for legal processes. Without this activity, the strikers will fall house by house.

By contrast, what are the characteristics of a counterproductive relationship between social organizations and the housing movement?

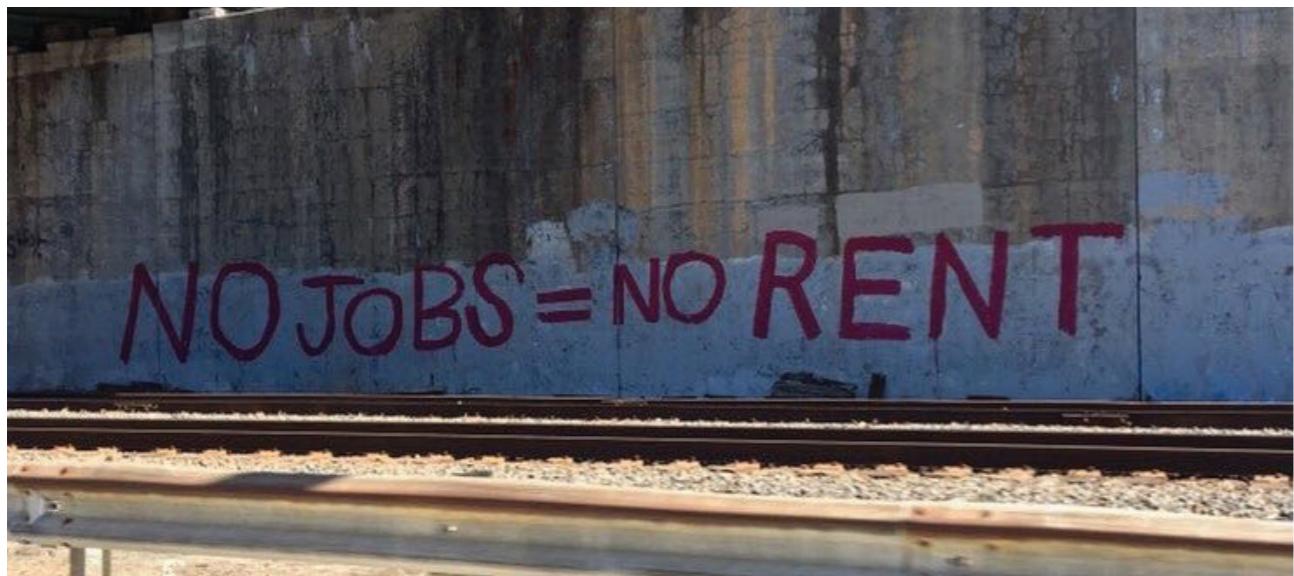
**Specialist activism.** It is admirable when people dedicate their lives to solidarity struggles for dignity and freedom. But problematic dynamics arise when a specialization is derived from this approach that generates distance between the experts and "normal people." In the case of the fight for housing, activists may end up being more aware of the perspectives of other "organized" activists and militants than they are of what is happening to other residents and precarious people. Consequently, they prioritize the interests of the organization (affiliating more members, looking good in the press, gaining status through negotiations with the authorities), when the interests of the residents should always take precedence (gaining access to decent and stable housing).

This alienation between activists and neighbors can manifest itself as false prudence. It is true that a rent strike is a very hard fight; it is not something to propose lightly. But taking a conservative position in the current situation seems to us to deny the reality that many people are already experiencing. A rent strike is dangerous—but it is undeniable that within the current crisis, the danger is already here. This month, tens of thousands of people will not be able to pay the rent, not to mention the tens of thousands who already live on the street in a situation of absolute vulnerability.»

The danger of specialist activism is especially great in the case of economically privileged people. It is admirable when people from well-to-do families decide to fight side by side with precarious people. But it is totally unacceptable for such people to try to determine the priorities or set the pace of the struggles of the precarious.. As in all cases of privilege, they should be transparent with their companions and honest with themselves and support the struggles of precarious people instead of trying to lead them.

**Limited scale or fragmented vision.** It is entirely understandable that people who have spent a lot of time fighting for housing would feel a little overwhelmed or doubtful about a general call for a rent strike. Indeed, it would be troubling if they didn't feel that way. It has been more or less a century since we saw rent strikes on this scale. But we must also acknowledge that it has been nearly a century since capitalism has experienced a crisis as intense as the one developing today—and the rent strike continues to be an effective tool. It should give us some peace of mind to know that tenants and organizations that have been involved in rent strikes for the past three years in Toronto and Los Angeles are supporting the current international call.

As for the danger of dividing up the struggles, we consider totally unacceptable any call-out that does not take into account the needs of the homeless and those without documents.



Although it is understandable that many organizations seeking short-term changes focus on a more specialized field or topic, they should not contribute to the fragmentation of struggles, undermining the possibility of solidarity. It is a tactic of the state to offer solutions for people with mortgages but nothing for tenants. We should not reproduce this approach even if we have good intentions. Therefore, all calls should support a moratorium on evictions and also legitimize the practice of occupying empty houses, or at least connect with calls that do.

**The Reform/Revolution dichotomy.** To speak plainly, it's an illusion to believe that it's possible to win a revolution and abolish all oppressive structures from one day to the next: revolutions consist of a long path of struggle after struggle. It's also an error to believe that it is possible to gain real reforms without creating a force that threatens the power of the state: states maintain social control and the well-being of the economy and they don't protect those who are dispensable to those causes. Almost all really beneficial reforms have been won by revolutionary movements, not by reformist movements.

There is a lot of important debate about the appropriate relationship between the state and political movements, about tactics and strategy. But we are stronger when we work together—when those who are dedicated to small but urgent gains are connected to those who work against

the fundamental sources of exploitation and fix their gaze on a horizon where exploitation no longer exists. At the end of the day, our struggles comprise an ecosystem. We'll never convince the whole world to think like we do, nor will we dominate all social movements; whoever tries to do so only weakens their movement. We should cultivate healthy relationships based in solidarity between different parts of the same struggle, sharing whenever possible—and when that's not possible, permitting each other to continue on a more or less parallel path. In order that this solidarity can function, it is necessary to respect the immediate work some people focus on and at the same time not to denounce any group's "radicalism" to the press or to the police.

It's easy for someone who spends half of her earnings on rent to appreciate a law that caps rent; for someone who can't afford private insurance to appreciate public health services; for someone who lives in a squatted apartment to appreciate a moratorium on evictions; for a migrant to appreciate legal protections against deportation. Those who don't personally experience any of these situations should empathize with those who do before solidifying their political ideas.

At the same time, many of us who experience precariousness choose not to create an identity out of it. We have to get to the root of the problem. Public health and rent control are great, but legal reforms and "public" good are not under our control, they are under the control of the state, and they will do us no good when the state decides it's inconvenient to maintain what they once gave us. Why has this pandemic resulted in such a grave crisis? Because the state has continually reduced the quality of public health services. Why has rent increased so much? Because the state passed the Urban Rental Law, stripping away protections won by previous generations.

Short-term measures are necessary, but we also need a revolutionary perspective, at least for whoever doesn't want to spend their whole life fighting for crumbs, for mere survival.

## Some Conclusions

Capitalism is global. States support one another at the global level. A revolution in one single place isn't possible, at least not for the long term. An internationalist vision is essential in this time of pandemic, xenophobia, borders, and transnational corporations. In the Spanish state, internationalism has been pretty weak of late. In Latin America, there have been strikes and revolts for free public transportation, there have been right-wing coups, there have been months and months of struggle, and many deaths. Yet in the Spanish state, not a peep. In Hong Kong, there was almost an entire year of protests against new authoritarian measures. In the Spanish state, silence. For all of 2019, just on the other side of the Pyrenees, the yellow vests gave it their all fighting against austerity. How many rallies showing solidarity have there been in the Spanish state?

Movements for freedom and dignity and against exploitation must be global. Right now we're suffering a global pandemic—and the strongest states, from the US to China, are responding with apathy and deadly incompetence or with a level of totalitarian surveillance (drones, real-time location surveillance of individuals, cameras in every public space that use facial recognition). In the Spanish state, we see a combination of incompetence and police authoritarianism.

The rent strike is already spreading through various neoliberal countries, where vast numbers of people are in danger of losing their homes. There is no doubt that this is also the situation here in the Spanish state. If we're not capable of internationalizing our struggles now, will we ever be? ■

**For solidarity and dignity,  
against precariousness.  
#RentStrikeNow**

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# Form a Tenants' Union!

## What is a Tenants' Union?

**Tenants' unions** are building, neighborhood or city-based organizations made up of and led by renters themselves to fight for our collective interests and rights.

Building-based tenants unions are generally made up of tenants who live in the same building and/or have the same landlord. Neighborhood and city-based tenant unions are networks of tenants who often have similar issues and stand in solidarity with each other, but may live in different buildings or have different landlords.

## Why form a Tenants Union? - Because you can win!

Everyone is talking about passing rent control and eviction protections, but where do you start? How do we build enough power to stay in our homes, communities and thrive?! We do this by organizing. We must organize because overcoming fear and isolation is impossible to do on our own. We organize because we seek to transform people's fear and isolation into dignity and solidarity both in your home, community and on a statewide level. Organizing isn't just sending out an email or creating a social media page, although those will likely be steps that you take. Organizing is building real face-to-face relationships between you and your neighbors over time. The organization of tenant unions are the building blocks to our translocal, statewide, and international movement.

## Our Tenants Union Organizing Guide:

We believe that housing is a human right, not a commodity. We advance policy that

is driven from tenant experience. To resist displacement, we must organize renters and other allied groups to make strong and bold demands of those in power. Organizing for tenants' rights to us means organizing tenant unions and building associations, building tenant power for the long-term. If we are to win the most transformative policy, we must center our movements around those most affected: low-income people of color. We seek alignment with other movements fighting against structural oppression because tenants do not live single-issue lives, and the right to housing will only be won by building power with other movements. This includes, but is not limited to movements that build collective power and are rooted in racial, gender, economic, environmental, and disability justice; trans and queer liberation, and indigenous sovereignty.

## First 3 steps to building a Tenants' Union:

In each of our cities, our path to building organizations has been different, but we've learned from each other that there are certain steps that are important and helpful, regardless of the organizing model we choose to organize our communities. We are continually revising and updating them as we try them out and learn more. Many of the steps are not something we do and then move on from, they are steps we strive to weave into everything we do. We often do multiple steps at the same time, and sometimes revisit an earlier step.

## Step 1: PLANT A SEED

The Organizing Team is the seed, usually 3-4 people, mostly tenants or residents who are fed up and ready to do something together.

With your organizing team talk about your vision of what you want to do together and how you want to do it. The more unified you can be, the stronger your seed will grow.

## Step 2: WATER THE SEEDS - Start Reaching Out To Others In Your Community

Set a time to go canvassing (door to door knocking) to connect with other residents. This might be in your apartment complex, on your block or in your neighbors kitchen. It's really important to share with others why you are organizing and listen to their concerns. A good rule of organizing is to spend two-thirds of your time listening.

**Editors note:** Obviously during Covid 19 this has become a virtual step. I've seen people setting up discord channels, facebook groups, »



shouting over balconies, passing notes and meeting up at the end of the garden and chatting over the road. The same applies for ...

### **Step 3: GET TOGETHER: Hold your first building/complex/community Assembly**

Note: many people call this a meeting instead of an assembly, but we call it an assembly because it encourages tenant empowerment, participation, and decision making. Calling it an assembly doesn't mean there has to be large turnout! Sometimes smaller assemblies with a core group are better at first.

All of us have fear and shame that we must take head-on and let go of for us to move forward. We do this by coming together regularly, sharing our stories, listening deeply to each other and supporting each other and identifying our common suffering and ideas for solutions. This is a process and it takes time.

Some things to consider when planning your first meeting agenda are:

#### **PREPARATION:**

Put an agenda together, identify a facilitator, let people know about the meeting in advance. Keep in mind these things: interpretation, food and childcare, and a location and time that works well for folks.

#### **OPENING:**

Make everyone feel welcomed and give them an opportunity to share about themselves; reground ourselves in our principles and purpose; choose a notetaker and timekeeper so meetings run smoothly and on time.

#### **PARTICIPATION AND ROLES:**

We strive to create spaces and activities to allow and encourage everyone to participate, sometimes we break out in small groups or pair up for deeper discussion; provide

opportunities for everyone to take different roles. For instance, residents can sign up to be "captains of their block or building," they are in charge of disseminating and collecting information in their block.

#### **MUTUAL AID & SUPPORT:**

It's important to create space for us to share what's coming up, provide support, and come up with plans to address the issues.

#### **EDUCATION:**

We are often made to feel like the issues we face are individual or unique - it's critical to always take time to understand the root causes of what causes displacement, eviction, rising rents and gentrification; we also take time to learn our history of housing struggles in our cities and beyond, and our what our rights are.

#### **MAKING DECISIONS TOGETHER:**

Often we identify common problems and make plans on how to solve them; we make key decisions democratically.

#### **CLOSING:**

We make announcements, evaluate meeting, pass the hat and lift people's spirits with a song or a chant.

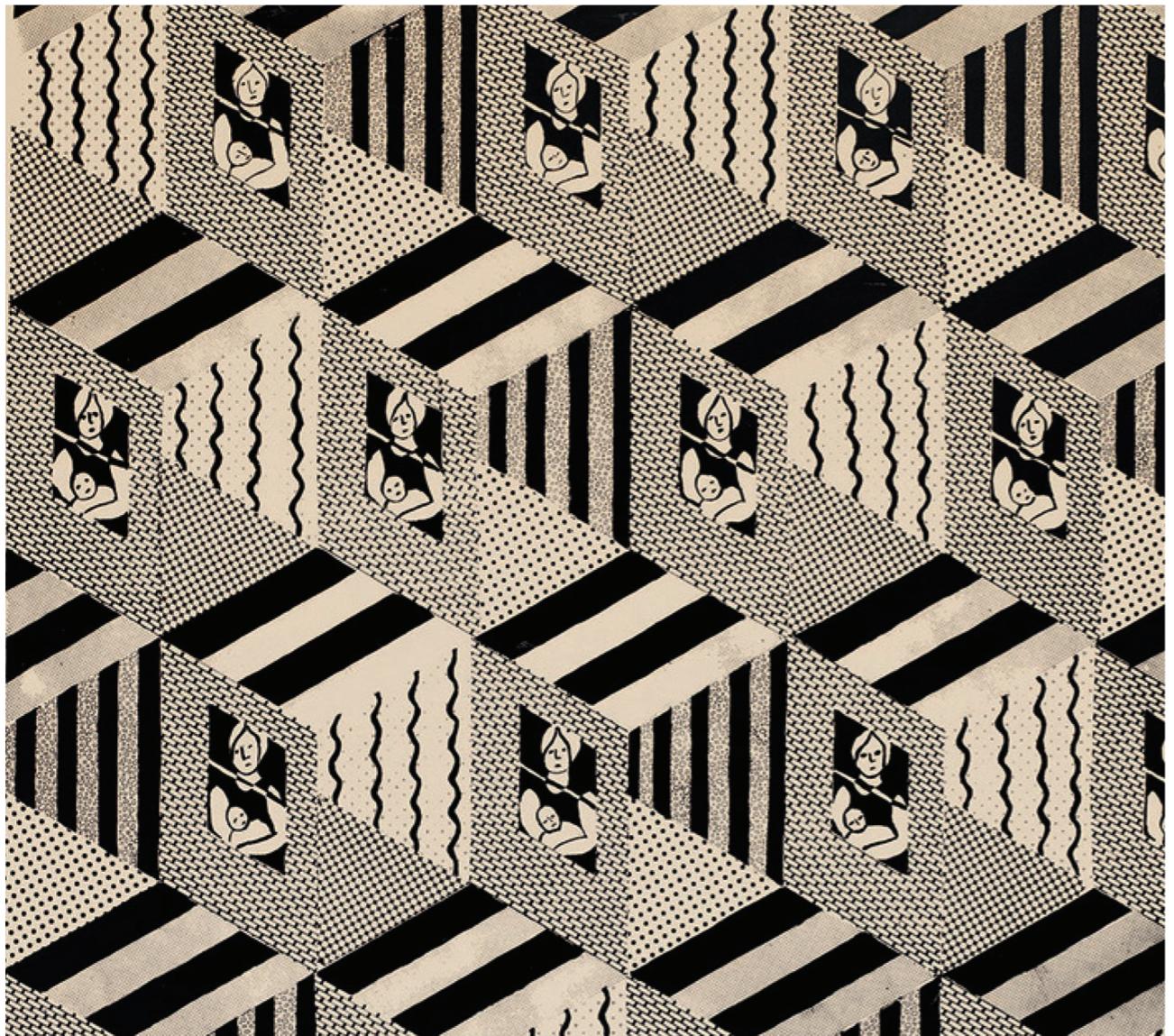
It's important that we carry out decisions we made and people follow through with their commitments; the notes are helpful to remind us what these were.

When you are first getting together to form a tenants' union, don't get too caught up in technical details like by-laws. Focus more on good participation and growing participation. If no one is part of the union then these details won't matter much! ■

#### **Extracted from:**

[www.tenantstogether.org/resources/  
form-tenants-union](http://www.tenantstogether.org/resources/form-tenants-union)





# CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY

## RENT STRIKING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

A HANDBOOK BY RENT STRIKE

Full version available at : [www.rent-strike.org/covid19](http://www.rent-strike.org/covid19)

## A wave of rent strikes in UK universities has already begun. It's time to spread it further...

If you're interested in taking action over the housing and renting crisis that Covid-19 has caused, you don't have to look far for inspiration: **students across the UK are already doing it, and already winning**. What's more, they're probably more useful examples than other rent strikes from the past, because they have all been organised under the unique lockdown conditions that the Covid-19 crisis has engendered, prohibiting the usual methods used to organise a strike such as door-knocking, leafletting, and demonstrations. This, naturally, has presented its own advantages and difficulties. So here's the warts and all, non-exhaustive picture of the direct action being taken at the moment in UK universities over rent, as far as we know at the time of writing...

### SOAS

Around 150 residents at a SOAS halls of residence in London, Dinwiddie House, [announced in March](#) that they would be withholding their rent until the third term's rent payment was cancelled. The rent strike is directed against Sanctuary Students, a private student accommodation provider that provides halls for SOAS students. While Sanctuary have reduced the cleaning services at Dinwiddie, and many students are under substantial financial duress, they are still expecting full rent payments as normal. This is also despite the fact that many universities, such as UCL, Durham, and [Lincoln](#), as well as private accommodation providers such as Unite Students and iQ, have cancelled the third term's payment (either for everyone, or just for those who have left their contract).

As of writing, the group has had no response from Sanctuary Students, and the strike is still going ahead, withholding hundreds of thousands of pounds from Sanctuary in the process. The strike is organised through a large group chat, with a smaller number of students and students' union officers taking the lead on designing sample emails that strikers can send to Sanctuary to put pressure on them. According to an organiser of the strike, spirits are high and a "good sense of solidarity" exists among the group. All power to them!

### SURREY

After an [anonymous post](#) on the university's "confession" page on Facebook advocated a rent strike, a Google Forms [pledge form](#) was created by pre-existing activist group [Surrey, Cut the Rent](#) which garnered 300 pledges to strike within 48 hours. The two demands of the strikers were simple: cancel the third term rent payment for everyone, and not subject any strikers to legal or academic sanctions. Unlike at SOAS, the strikers lived in university-managed, not private, halls.

As of writing, the threatened strike at Surrey has had mixed results. As a result of the group's pressure, university management announced within a few days that it would be allowing students to withdraw early from their accommodation contract and not pay the third term's rent. While this was a **partial win for the strike**, it also nullified its power, breaking the strikers into those who could stay in university accommodation v.s. those who could not. The majority of strikers had already left university accommodation and thus took up the university's offer, leaving behind those who had to stay in university accommodation to fend for themselves. Evidently, the lockdown conditions inhibited the group from building a proper network of solidarity and care, or a genuine collective interest, preventing the strike from achieving its demand of a cancelled third term payment *for everyone*.

### PLYMOUTH

Students have recently announced an exciting and ambitious rent strike being organised across the four universities in Plymouth, in both university-owned and privately-run student accommodation, as well as some lettings agencies. [A Facebook group](#), now with over 400 members, was set up,

and now the group has a [manifesto](#), [website](#), and [press coverage](#) in the local newspaper. The group have done lots of outreach, contacting the Plymouth branch of Solidarity Federation, MPs and local media outlets.

So far, the campaign has had some success with the universities, who have cancelled the third term's rent, but are still fighting to get the private providers to cancel the payment. Solidarity, Plymouth!



A rent strike banner from the current Bristol strike

## BRISTOL

In Bristol, the rent strike is different from the rest, in that rather than targeting university accommodation, it's targeting a private student lettings agency called [Digs](#).

The impetus for this strike was an email from Digs, sent to all their student tenants, explaining that they had to pay rent no matter what the situation with their student loans were and the effect that Covid-19 was having on their finances. This angered a great many tenants, and organisers of the strike could see that the atmosphere was right for calling for further action, due to the number of posts they saw online, particularly on university

confessions pages, expressing anger at the situation.

Consequently, organisers from [Bristol Cut The Rent](#) set up and distributed a 'sign up to strike' Google Form, which was posted on every social media account they had access to, all the university Facebook groups they could find, and the university confessions page, in order to reach Digs renters. 130 people signed up to strike in 4 days!

Importantly, they asked for all the strikers for their phone numbers (as well as emails), so they could set up a WhatsApp group for all of them to keep in contact and further organise. This was really important for growing the sense of community between striking tenants, doing media callouts, and also providing a space where they could collectively write responses to Digs and our landlords.

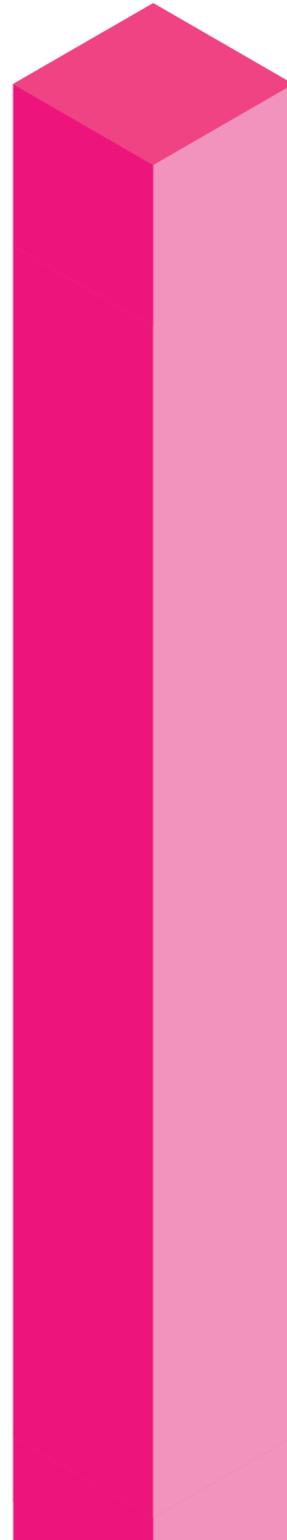
The final key thing that is currently helping the strike grow is the media interest. Organisers have reached out to as many media contacts as they possibly can, to get the story out there locally in Bristol and nationally. This is really helping put pressure on landlords and the letting agency and helping the campaign grow and succeed!

## UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

A rent strike has been organised in UoL's intercollegiate halls, by activists in and around a group called '[Liberate the University](#)'. The strike was originally organised in order to fight against their exploitative policy of charging students who were unable to remove their belongings from their rooms during this time of crisis.

Organisers have utilised existing organisational structures within their group, with activists split into **working groups** focusing on research, outreach and direct action. This division of roles has allowed them to move swiftly with a social media campaign, whilst simultaneously contacting residents and various journalists about the campaign. Emphasis has been put onto the press work, in order to adapt to the unique circumstances of the quarantine and accept that - without possibility of physical demonstrations - it is essential to make use of press attention to put pressure on the university.

It has been harder to gain traction than it would be in person, but they've been contacting people directly who seem sympathetic on halls group chats and have had some success. Only a few days into their rent strike they've **already forced UoL to amend their policy to only charge residents a storage fee rather than their full rent** - this change was only communicated after a journalist asked them for comment, to which they responded by telling him this had always been their policy, despite both them and the journalist having screenshot evidence that this was not the case. You can keep up to date with their campaign [here](#).



# What are your demands?

**It will be very difficult to maintain a strike and keep it focused if you don't have a clear idea of what you're fighting for (not just against).** Before you start organising your rent strike, therefore, think about why you are doing it and what you want out of it. Talk to others who are interested in striking and listen to their particular struggles. Many people will want to strike because they don't want to pay for their accommodation while they're in lockdown somewhere else; others will want to strike because they have lost their job but cannot leave the accommodation as they have, for example, an abusive or unsafe home/family environment. These diverse needs need to be taken into account when formulating your demands.

Once your demands have been settled, make sure you are clear in communicating your demands, not just to management but also to new strikers. If you can clearly communicate how your demands are connected you can use them to build solidarity between the groups of students who are joining the rent strike for different reasons.

**Below we've set out a set of template demands** that you might find useful to build your strike around, based on what the campaigns covered in the previous section have demanded. Remember that this is only a template; add or subtract whatever you feel like depending on the local particularities of your strike. Many local groups contain these demands within a longer open letter that they send publicly to their accommodation provider, which lays out the specifics of their situation. (Examples of these are below.)

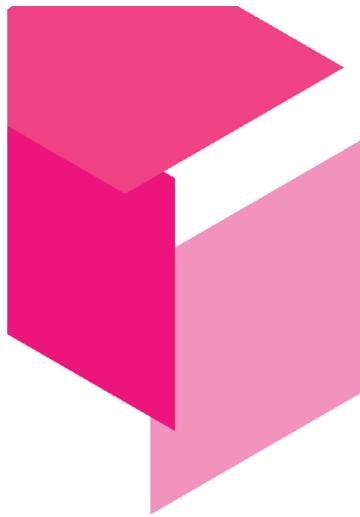
*We, students at [your university name] in [your halls/accommodation provider], are announcing today that we will be going on rent strike starting from xxxx, unless or until our demands are met. These five demands are:*

1. Cancellation of rent at all halls, both university and private, for all students, for the remainder of the academic year 2019-2020.
2. Give students who are self-isolating in their halls the freedom to remain without the burden of rent.
3. To offer all students a no-penalty early release clause from their tenancy contracts, for both this, and the next, academic years.
4. End all evictions for the duration of the crisis, not just a slow down on the eviction process.
5. That the university make no attempt at punishing or reprimanding the strikers legally or academically.

For examples of other rent strike demands, click the following hyperlinks: [Surrey](#), [SOAS](#), [Plymouth](#), [University of London](#).

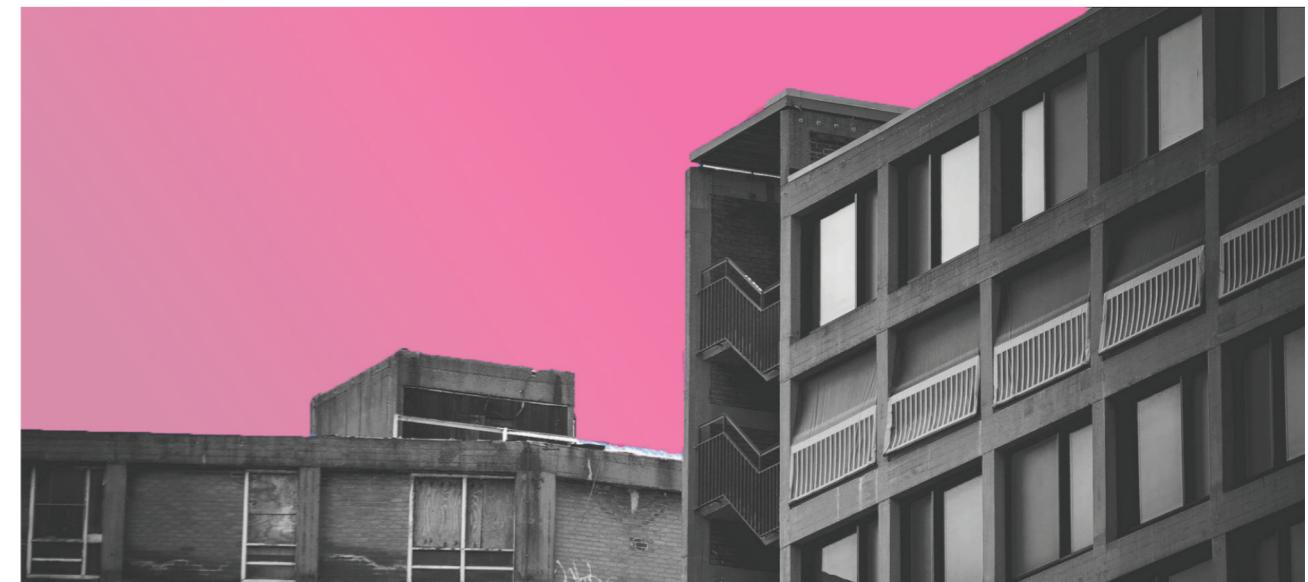
## CALLING OFF THE STRIKE

Make sure that you collectively discuss at what point you will call off the strike, based on your demands. Rent striking requires you to balance the risks to your members and the gains you can make. Think about how many demands must be met and what point of escalation are you collectively unwilling to go to. Don't necessarily give up on your demands at the first hurdle or partial win, though!



# Organising in a lockdown

*Many of the normal strategies and tactics for organising and spreading a rent strike, such as halls' assemblies and door-knocking, simply aren't possible at the moment due to the pandemic. Like much of the organising currently happening around Covid-19 at the moment, that means we have to focus on online means of organising student tenants. Below we've included some of our tops tips for doing so:*



## 1. GAUGE INTEREST ONLINE

Usually, rent strike organisers can door-knock halls and organise in-person halls assemblies to gauge interest for a strike, and start important conversations about our exploitation as tenants. However, given this is not possible, it is important to gauge interest through other methods. If you live in student halls and have a **halls' group chat** (or any other relevant large group chat), then send feelers out to these chats – ask how people feel about the current accommodation situation – do they think we should be being charged by the university for our third term rent? Would they be interested in rent striking over this or other issues?

If your university has one, then you can also send out these feeler questions in a post on your **university's confessions page**, and see what sort of response it garners. Not only will this assist you in understanding the current interest in a rent strike or other action around housing on your campus, it will also begin to place the idea in student tenants' minds, and make it easier to convince them to pledge to strike later on.

## 2. VIDEO CALL MEETINGS

When organising with others online, it can be tempting to do everything in a group messenger chat. Whilst this is good for small updates and decisions, it's hard to have proper discussion in them and many important points will be lost within them. **Try to have regular online calls with other organisers**, with an agenda for these meetings written before in a collective document (such as a google doc). You should also have someone chosen as the chair of the meeting beforehand, who can moderate discussion.

It is also useful to have a **legend** for facilitating the meetings, to ensure people aren't talking over each other (e.g. send "1" to the chat if you want to make a point, "2" if you want to respond to a point, "C" for clarification, "+" if you agree, etc.) These meetings will not only be more constructive, but they will be good for helping maintain organiser morale – it's always nice to see your friends' faces when you're stuck inside! Zoom and Jitsi are easy to use video call platforms you can use for these meetings.

## 3. CREATE AN ONLINE FORM

Not only is this important for collecting contact details of rent strikers, but **an online form is simple resource to spread round social media and various student group chats**. It also ensures you can collate information on which halls have large numbers of sign ups and which need more outreach work.

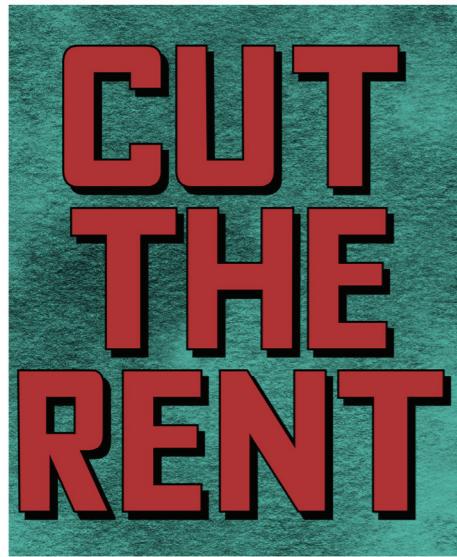
Another benefit of using an online form, rather than a petition or other document, is **it can include the majority of vital information within it**, which prevents you from having to write long messages and social media posts, that will probably be ignored by potential rent strikers. Always ensure the responses to these online forms are only viewable by the organisers of the rent strike – most rent strike groups use Google Docs/Forms in order to do this. Online sign-up forms usually ask for the following information:

1. Email address
2. Phone number
3. Halls of Residence
4. Are you willing to join the rent strike and withhold your third term rent?
5. Do you consent to being contacted with updates about the campaign?
6. Do you have any other information you believe is important for the organisers to know?

## 4. SPREAD THE FORM EVERYWHERE

**Post it regularly in any and all halls group chats you can find of.** If you don't live in halls, then contact someone you know who is to post it for you, and get them to message their friends in other student halls to do the same. **Freshers'/course group chats** are also extremely useful for spreading the sign-up form, as well as any general university facebook groups. If you have a university confessions page, be sure to post the sign-up form there with a short description at least every one or two days. Be sure in all messages and social media posts to encourage signees to share the form with all their flatmates/friends/etc.

If your university has any associated **big social media pages**, such as a **meme page**, **message them to see if they'll share the form** (and maybe even make a meme about the strike to send over and sweeten the deal). Make a collective spreadsheet of all the union societies and campaign groups at your university, and go through and message them all, asking them to post the form on their social media and/or spread round their membership, and note down in the spreadsheet which societies have been contacted and what their responses were.



## 5. AESTHETIC SOCIAL MEDIA

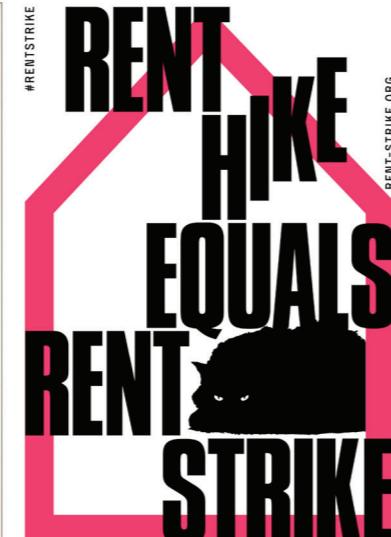
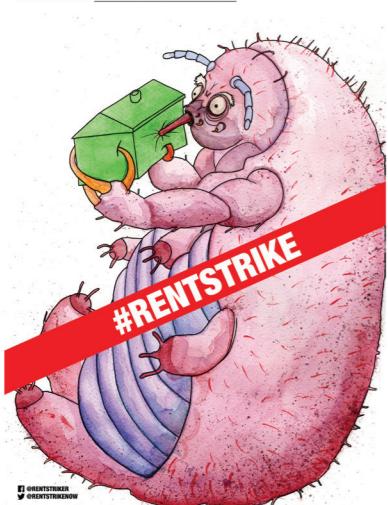
Have public facing social media accounts to share the sign-up form on, as well as any updates on the campaign. Think about where your audience will be, and be sure to pay extra attention to maintaining social media presence on these platforms – for instance, if most people on your campus use Instagram, then be sure to post at least a couple of Instagram stories every day about the strike.

Accompany all these posts with cool graphics. Think about your audience – what will appeal to them? Remember that red and black anarcho-punk aesthetics might not be appealing to the majority of student tenants! Don't know how to do graphic design? Ask around and find a mate who does, or re-appropriate editable designs from [www.rent-strike.org/aesthetics](http://www.rent-strike.org/aesthetics). Some of these are shown below.

## 6. PHONEBANK

Maintaining numbers of the strike is important. There may be a good number of people who sign up and forget to cancel their direct debit for rent, or might not be sure if the strike is still going ahead. Use the phone numbers you've collected from the sign-up form and distribute them amongst the organisers. Write a call script, and call every number, reminding them to not pay their next rent instalment, and answer any questions they may have about the strike. This will ensure you have the highest possible turnout.

**JOIN THE RENT-STRIKE.ORG**



## 7. ONLINE ACTIONS

Just because you're stuck inside doesn't mean you can't build on the leverage you've created with the strike. Online actions could include writing a template email that all strikers and supporters can mass email to the university accommodation officer, or leaving mass bad reviews of the university online. Also utilise the attention the strike will gain by getting in contact with the press – having a press release ready to send off on day one is extremely useful!

## MAINTAINING SOLIDARITY

*In these times of crisis, it might be easy to find lots of individual students enthusiastic about rent striking. The difficult part, however, is turning these individuals into a collective, bound together by solidarity and care for one another. Building this community will be key to winning your strike – but in these times of lockdown, this will be extra difficult. So here are some tips for building solidarity in these difficult times...*

## Form a solidarity group

Maintaining solidarity is key to winning the strike. Especially during the lockdown, student tenants' may be feeling extra vulnerable and isolated – an online solidarity group (on Facebook or another platform) is a good way of countering this! Not only will this allow strikers to keep in touch and socialise with each other, but it can also double up as a mutual aid group to help residents with any problems they have over the coming months, which in turn will only make the solidarity of the community stronger!

Activities could include running groceries or medication to vulnerable or immunocompromised strikers or providing a friendly, listening ear and emotional support to those who feel isolated or overwhelmed by the crisis.

## Maintain contact with the strikers

Once you've collected the contact details of tenants' willing to strike, keep in contact with them, letting them know how negotiations are going and what's generally going on around the strike. Happy updates from other campaigns round the country are sure to also be appreciated and help maintain the morale of the strikers.

Invite strikers to open organising video-call meetings (using platforms such as Zoom, Jitsi, or Skype), and maybe even organise online social events (like a video-call pub quiz, an online house party, etc.). This will help build solidarity between strikers and make it harder for the university to try and get strikers to capitulate. Whilst ensuring you're keeping in contact with strikers, try not to inundate them with emails, as they will stop opening them if you do so.

In all seriousness, just have some fun with it: do whatever fucking weird online social activity that pops into your head. At the very least you'll have a good evening during some pretty miserable lockdown conditions, and potentially meet some new friends/comrades. Building the organisation and the community is just as important as reaching the goal itself.



**We are renters** in London on strike until the COVID-19 crisis is over. We are living in unprecedented times. As the government started telling people not to go out, those of us in paid employment started losing our jobs in droves. The scheme to furlough workers came too late to save our jobs for many of us and the benefits system has been overwhelmed with nearly a million applications for Universal Credit in the first two weeks of lockdown. Not that Universal Credit fully covers most private rents in London anyway.

Because many of us can't pay our rent, we have decided that we won't pay our rent. Those of us who can pay for now are also striking: out of solidarity and because in a time of crisis like this we don't know what the future holds.

None of us can afford for our landlords to continue to take vast chunks of our income. The housing crisis in London is nothing new. Private renters hand over extortionate amounts of money every month to landlords who have bought up the city, stopping them from ever being able to buy a home of their own, and council and housing association rents don't lag far behind. We are in the position of having a home to call our own (for now) but many aren't – 1 in every 52 people in London is homeless – and many of us were just one step away from homelessness before this crisis began, especially those of us who rely on benefits.

This can't continue. Everyone needs access to a safe and comfortable home and now is the time to demand it. We demand a complete suspension of rent until the COVID-19 crisis is over with nothing to pay back afterwards. We demand that safe and comfortable rent-free homes are provided immediately for all those who do not currently have them. That means homes that are provided, free-of-charge, to those with no resources, to those denied them by the institution of border checks in housing, to those fleeing domestic abuse; to all those denied a home by the current system. It means the government following through on its promise to house all those sleeping rough and to do so safely.

It's on all of us to make this happen. The government hastened to bring in mortgage payment holidays for property owners (including buy-to-let landlords!) – and even went as far as promising to house all rough sleepers once it became apparent that their existence threatened the lives of the rich – but cannot be expected to abolish rent, even for the shortest amount of time, because we might start asking why we are paying it to start with.

This will only work if enough of us strike. Rent Strike London was launched at the end of March by a smallish group of people, because some of us had lost our jobs and were unable to make our next rent payment, and because we knew that hundreds of thousands of others were in the same situation. We didn't plan for this in advance or spend weeks building for it in our communities. We did it because there was an urgent need for those not paying their rent to not stand alone, and we are building ways of bringing those who are not paying together as we go. As of the start of April, over 300 have signed an open letter to landlords and the government declaring that they are on rent strike and over 200 have joined the London Renters' Solidarity Group on Facebook. We need many, many more.

We are working on a tool to connect renters who share the same landlord, seeking legal advice and working out ways to resist eviction during lockdown: despite a moratorium on evictions,

illegal evictions are still taking place. We are building solidarity networks in our communities so that we are ready for when the ban on evictions is lifted and the shit hits the fan. We need many more to get involved (there are 2.7 million private tenants alone in London!) – if you can help out in any way email [rentstrikelondon@protonmail.com](mailto:rentstrikelondon@protonmail.com) or join the solidarity group.

There is a lot of historical precedent for non-payment strikes working, from the abolition of the poll tax (helped by the odd riot) to the recent rent strike by students at University College London (UCL), which led to the university freezing their rents. There is global momentum behind this rent strike – with strikes springing up across the world and getting a lot of traction the United States in particular, where tenants are graffitiing their buildings and hanging white sheets out of their windows to show that they are striking, and the strike is getting mainstream media coverage, and Spain where over 200 unions and collectives have joined the call for a rent strike. In the UK rent strikes have been declared in Bristol and on several university campuses as students are told to pay rent on empty rooms over the summer term. We hope that over the next few weeks many more groups and organisations across London and the

UK will join the global call for a rent strike and we will get the numbers we need to make this work.

As the economy grinds to a halt and bodies pile up in the morgues, it's becoming more and more obvious that our current system is designed to prioritise the profits of the rich at the cost of everybody else. At a time where our governments are taking advantage of the pandemic to implement authoritarian measures and everyone feels isolated and scared, our only hope for a better future is to support each other with solidarity and self-reliance as our guiding principles. And in the city of London, where millions struggle to pay their rent every month, we must start by making sure no one needs to worry if they'll have a roof to sleep under once this crisis is over. ■

**Join the strike:**  
[chng.it/dhppdTVG2q](https://chng.it/dhppdTVG2q)

**Like the Facebook page:**  
[facebook.com/RentStrikeLondon](https://facebook.com/RentStrikeLondon)  
[facebook.com/groups/524878065096847](https://facebook.com/groups/524878065096847)

**Follow us on Twitter & Insta:**  
[@rentstrikeLDN](https://@rentstrikeLDN)



## More of the state you've got (while mutual aid grows to tackle coronavirus)

**As various governments** leap into action, or not, over the reality of the coronavirus pandemic, it's evident that the different approaches to containment and delay have a heavy ideological component.

The mass surveillance approach of China has seen blocking of criticism of the state on the widespread social media platform WeChat and citizen reporters being taken off the streets, whilst the e-commerce app Alipay (like Paypal in UK) platform has been commandeered to build and track individual movements. It is doing this by assigning a 'Alipay Health Code' status of Red, Yellow or Green which is then being used to control access to work, public facilities and movement in general.

In the UK, the central government's approach is equally ideological, strongly criticised last week for being too 'laissez-faire', seemingly having more concern for the economic system than its people, especially with the idea that letting the population reach a 'herd immunity' is almost something to encourage, which would be a death sentence for many people who are immuno-compromised or have particular disabilities or long-term conditions. Added to this is the state's health ministry choosing to inform itself by expertise in behavioural economics and public health 'nudging' to try and encourage citizens to do the right thing. As a result, action to stop social contact has been led as much by non-state decision making such as the decision of sporting bodies to cancel games and fixtures into the future.

In Italy, the government has moved to being more controlling, introducing fines and threatening prison time for people who don't adhere to the new travel bans.

For anarchists then, a ray of sunshine must be the evidence of rapid formation of mutual aid groups across the country, especially on Facebook. Freedom has published a list of these which is growing very fast indeed. Mutual aid has been forced on us by the state's neoliberal approach to public services

and life in general during the last decade of austerity. The idea from HM government that older people over 70 years old will be asked to begin isolating themselves "within the coming weeks" for "a very long time" is obviously going to create worry and practical difficulty that will require a huge community effort to overcome. But many people are already involved in mutual aid activities such as food banks. Existing tenants', neighbourhood and church groups are likely to be at the forefront of rapid response. Anarchists, with our experience of running local solidarity networks, are already involved in setting up or supporting new groups. These groups will help ensure people who are vulnerable will be fed and get their medication, and can coordinate things like childcare for health workers and others.

Workers are also taking action, pushing their employers to do the right thing more quickly. It was evident in the University strikes last week that strikers on picket lines had used the solidarity and

communications on the ground to make bosses act more quickly to close off things like 'open days' that would have seen mass movements of potential students and parents across England. All over Italy, workers in factories, steel works and docks who are not able to do their jobs at home, are striking over their bosses lack of care.

Coronavirus won't be beaten by community mutual aid alone, but groups that are involved in direct communication are surely a vital public health resource that will help counter fear and dampen the noise of bad information more effectively than direct marketing or broadcast media messages. More optimistically, if not too optimistic in this present crisis, these types of groups may well act as a springboard for the better social cohesion that is part of what it will take to achieve social revolution in the future. Hopefully too, mutual aid of the kind envisaged by anarchists will also realise a vaccine in due course, by means of scientific cooperation.



**Matt Hancock,**  
8 days after testing positive for coronavirus, coughing, sneezing and spluttering, opens the new makeshift hospital in London yesterday.

The W.H.O. advises at least 14 days of isolation.

On the other hand it will be important to learn from the different ways states are responding to the outbreak because the measures being put in place will no doubt be applied in the near future to control borders and movement, whether for the purpose of internal repression within states or regions or to deal with the climate emergency or other yet unknown crises that capitalism will create.

## Government and Covid-19: an ideology of inequality

Three weeks after the article above the UK government has accepted, as in Italy and elsewhere, that containment and the still to be widely available use of testing kits along the lines of World Health Organisation advice is a better strategy to allow health services to cope. But so much was already known globally earlier in this century with similar coronaviruses MERS and SARS. These outbreaks required global collaboration to stop their spread between people and to protect healthcare workers.

As the death rate in UK has been doubling every 3-4 days and the number of confirmed cases is doubling every 6 days at the time of writing, massive field hospitals are being built in exhibition halls with basic respiratory critical care and retired workers are being asked to come back to work. NHS workers are under intense pressure and are at risk of infection. Social care is a time-bomb with little safety provisions routinely available for care workers as yet, and both community and care home residents could be infected from visiting staff, and vice-versa. Agency workers who visit multiple care homes and the community are badly paid and are still at the bottom of concern. In care homes, advanced care planning, including consent for 'do not resuscitate' of frail residents who cannot or will not be moved to hospitals is being rushed into while families cannot even visit, similarly with end-of-life planning for severely frail people living in the community.

How did it come to this? While politicians apparently stand together in national unity it is clear that those in power can get the testing that was ideologically dismissed just 3 weeks ago. Resources for the NHS and Social Care has been decimated, »

especially under the Conservatives. Their belated responsiveness to the Covid-19 outbreak continues to be ideological.

Whilst the mutual aid we are seeing is an excellent example of anarchist principle in action, we cannot allow the state to get away with its pretence of 'we're all in this together'. The applauding of NHS workers by politicians puts a sour taste in the mouth knowing how they have tried to privatise healthcare over the last decades. It is the massive inequalities, debt and insecure living and working conditions created by the capitalist system lorded over by them that has resulted in almost 1 million people starting claims for Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit, up around 7 times compared to March 2019. Food Banks are in full swing (and they already were). Thousands of small companies are applying for emergency bank loans. 1.3m children in England who are at risk of going hungry are in line to get £15 a week shopping vouchers issued by their school (with alternative arrangements being made in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Homeless people are at particular risk for whom support via local councils has been severely cut over the last years and charities are talking about a new wave of soon-to-be homeless people who are living in hostels or temporary accommodation, when their precarious income dries up. The terrible situation of so many people is a testament to the society our leaders have created for us.

Right now, mutual aid stands as a moral and practical position that is making a real difference. This is to be supported because at the same time, from leaders such as in Brazil there are also far-right allusions to survival of the fittest, being a real man, or appealing to the divine. Furthermore, as in Chile, governments are using the idea of national unity in a 'state of catastrophe' to destroy popular opposition, as seen by the removal in the last weeks of protest art and sculptures from Santiago's main square which was a major place of demonstration in the recent uprising. Here and elsewhere we are likely to see governments making the moves that they think will give them the greatest chances of staying in power both now and into the aftermath period of the pandemic. ■

## How Indigenous communities are working to protect their communities

**Across the world**, mainstream media has focused on the actions (or inaction) of states and corporations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; such an uninterrupted focus helps to enforce 'capitalist realism' and the flawed, colonialist narrative that nation states, modelled in the image of Western Europe, are the basic components of society. In this article, we will acknowledge that the world exists beyond nation states and the Capitalist cultural hegemony and share some of the responses of First Nations and Indigenous groups to the current crisis, in hopes that, by doing so, we may learn how we can deal with situations like this without surrendering to state coercion, and that we will encourage further solidarity for these comrades in our shared struggle against colonialism.

### The Zapatistas and the people of Chiapas

On the 16th of March, "from the mountains of south-eastern Mexico", the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee of the General Command of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) issued a statement, recommending "the full and immediate closure of the Caracoles and Centers of Resistance and Rebellion." to the Good Government Councils and the Autonomous Municipalities, and "adherence to the series of recommendations and special hygiene measures", which will be distributed to all communities, towns and barrios by the EZLN, to "the entire Zapatista organisational structure.". In addition to urging people to "follow the necessary scientifically-based sanitary measures that will allow us to survive this pandemic", the Committee made a call to everyone to "hold high the flag of the struggle for humanity" by sustaining the struggle against "femicide and violence against women", by continuing the "defense of territory and Mother Earth" and by maintaining the fight for "the disappeared,

murdered, and imprisoned". The Committee made sure to emphasise the importance of not losing contact with one another, and to, instead, "temporarily change our forms of relating as compañeras, compañeros, compañeroas, sisters, brothers, and hermanoas."

The Committee, in the statement, stated that these measures against COVID-19 are part of their "commitment as Zapatistas" to the "struggle for life", decrying the "frivolous irresponsibility and lack of seriousness" shown by states and politicians as they used "this serious humanitarian problem" to attack one another instead of taking action to control the spread of COVID-19.

The Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee's statement can be found here: [www.enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/](http://www.enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/)

Additionally, the School Of Chiapas has recently announced its 'million peso pledge', hoping to raise donations to meet their goal of one million pesos, which will be directly given to the Zapatista health system in order to support it and save lives throughout the duration of the pandemic. You can contribute to this goal by donating here:

[www.schoolsforchiapas.org/store/gifts-of-change/million-peso-pledge/](http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/store/gifts-of-change/million-peso-pledge/)

### The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP)

A consensus was reached, on the 30th of March, via a virtual meeting amongst representatives of the nine indigenous organisations affiliated to AIDESEP for a call to be made for their communities to close their borders as a form of protection against the spread of COVID-19. In addition, AIDESEP called for masks and food to be given to those who have not benefitted from the state bond in Peru, where the majority of support has currently been limited to urban areas. Attention was also brought to the fact that it is only a matter of time before COVID-19 reaches the native communities in the Loreto region, where the highest number of people infected

by the disease has been recorded, by Jorge Pérez, president of the Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the East, stressing the need for established protocols.

The Amazon regions of Loreto, Ucayali, San Martin, Madre de Dios and Amazonas agreed with the actions demanded by the Peruvian state's declaration of emergency, but believed it is necessary to have a differentiated plan for the Amazonian indigenous peoples, in order to respond to the needs of the population which has not received help from the state.

A public letter, addressed to the Peruvian government, has been drawn up in order to bring attention to the requests of AIDESEP and the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic will have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable populations in the world, in this case the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

Further details on the decisions made in the virtual meeting, as well as the public letter, can be found here in Spanish: <http://aidesep.org.pe/noticias/amazonia-indigena-se-declara-en-emergencia-por-el-covid-19>

### Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY)

As of the 24th of March, strict border controls have been put in place by the APY, a local government area for Aboriginal Australians, in order to protect vulnerable members of the anangu from the COVID-19 pandemic. The General Manager of the APY, Richard King, stated that "the COVID 19 pandemic has given rise to unprecedented circumstances with immediate and potentially fatal consequences for APY Lands residents, who have well documented poor health and living conditions."; indigenous people are more than eight times more likely to hospitalised as the result of a virus outbreak than other people in Australia. With the exception of the emergency services, only essential service providers with permits are able to enter the APY lands, and they are not permitted to interact with the anangu. To enforce these border controls, the APY has made use of the 'Biosecurity Act 2015' and is working alongside the Government of South Australia.»

including their policing services; penalties for unpermitted entry into the APY lands can be as severe as five years imprisonment.

However, some people in the APY community, including the APY Art Centre Collective (APYACC), do not believe that these measures will be sufficient to protect the *anangu* and that, despite the denial of Richard King, it is a case of when, not if, COVID-19 will hit their communities. As a result, the APYACC has been coordinating with local health services to relocate at least 30 elders and other vulnerable people to a boarding house in Adelaide that is currently not being used by schoolchildren; it is planned for the people to be housed there for four to six months, with visits from other people heavily restricted. As part of the relocation, the APYACC has proposed chartering a bus, supplying staff and relevant medical service providers, and running a creative program. The relocation has received the support of Pat Turner, the chief executive of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, who stated that leaving the elders and the other vulnerable people in the APY lands would be dangerous as "they will be the first to be impacted when the virus arrives, which it will", adding that "I believe in Aboriginal self-determination and I believe it should be supported".

#### **First Nations in Canada.**

After spending a week in Havana in February, First Nations leaders and health technicians from Alberta and Manitoba expressed the interest of their communities in working with Cuba to provide professionals trained in basic health services to traditionally marginalised communities in Canada. Jerry Daniels, the great chief of the southern region of Manitoba, and of the Organization of the Chiefs of the South, made a speech at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, stating that First Nations peoples have "have been limited in their access to health care provided by the government", which is why they are in need of additional support in these communities. Chief Dave Ledoux of the Gambler Pueblo compared the health philosophy of Cuba, which

has involved providing international medical aid since 1959, to the traditional medicine model of First Nations peoples, and said "the more than 600 first nations in Canada include more than one million people who would benefit" from collaboration with Cuba. The Gambler First Nation already has an agreement for a Cuban doctor to live on-reserve, but visa issues have so far prevented that from happening.

On the 31st of March, it was reported that two First Nation communities in Manitoba, the Norway House Cree Nation and the Cross Lake Band of Indians, sent a letter to Canada's Defence Minister, asking for help from the Canadian military to establish a military hospital and other preparations against COVID-19. The letter stated that military medical infrastructure could "make a big difference" for the 15,000 combined inhabitants of the two nations. At the time of writing, no military help has been given to these First Nations, but the Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jonathan Vance has said the military is prepared to respond to any requests for help.

The Ahousaht First Nation has been posting regular social media updates to relay information to Ahousaht residents regarding the pandemic, encouraging, on the 28th of March, residents to stay at home; in order to help residents whilst they stay at home, internet access freely available for the month of April.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation has barred entry to its three communities on Long Beach, and the Ucluelet First Nation is restricting access to its community to residents only; it is hoped that these measures will slow the spread of COVID-19 in these communities.

A news article with statements from First Nation leaders regarding collaboration with Cuba can be found here: <http://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/salud/215845-canadian-first-nations-interested-in-establishing-health-cooperation-with-cuba>

Information regarding the Ahousaht First Nation's response can be found here: [www.ahousaht.ca](http://www.ahousaht.ca) ■



## Navajo Hopi COVID 19 Response

In response to the escalating health crisis facing Diné (Navajo) and Hopi communities in Northern Arizona, Southern Utah, and New Mexico, the Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund has mobilized volunteer emergency food and water distribution throughout the region.

*"It is so amazing to see our communities come together and respond proactively to the threat of coronavirus and COVID-19 on the Navajo and Hopi reservations," said Ethel Branch, former Navajo Nation Attorney General and founder of the Relief Fund. "I thought this would make just a small impact, but the great love and care that the public has for our communities, and their sense of justice to correct the inequities that exist in Indigenous communities has morphed this effort into a movement."*

On March 15, 2020, Ethel organized a GoFundMe campaign to provide relief for Diné and Hopi families impacted by the COVID-19 virus. Within 22 days, the campaign has raised more than \$400,000. "In just a few weeks we have managed to build a massive collaborative effort bringing together Diné and Hopi professionals, grassroots organizers and concerned community members to build the social net our communities have always deserved but have been denied because of treaty violations and on-going systemic injustices that make our communities extremely vulnerable to this pandemic" said Janene Yazzie, team lead in New Mexico for the Navajo-Hopi COVID-19 Relief Fund, "We have the expertise to build the solutions most meaningful for our people."

The GoFundMe campaign's mission is to "help the elderly (especially those raising their grandchildren), the immunocompromised and mobility impaired, single parents, and struggling families by helping them buy groceries, water, health supplies, and necessary items so they (and their vulnerable communities) can be protected from exposure to the virus by

engaging volunteers to make these purchases and deliver them to a safe transfer location for those in need. We are also helping to stop the spread of COVID-19 on these reservations by engaging volunteers to sew masks for medical workers and first responders on Navajo and Hopi." Since the campaign launched, the Relief Fund has received more than 4,500 requests for support and mobilized numerous volunteers to provide direct relief to over 850 families in over 21 communities, including Chilchinbeto, Hard Rock, Forest Lake, Kayenta, the Village of Bacavi, the Village of Oraibi, Oljato, Monument Valley, Tuba City, the Village of Upper Moencopi, the Village of Lower Moencopi, Dilcon, and Fort Defiance.

*"Volunteers with the Navajo Hopi Covid 19 Relief effort are doing a great job responding to the crisis with resources raised from everyday people," states Lillian Hill, Hopi Indigenous Food Advocate and Community Organizer, "Our Native American communities face unique and substantial disparities that put our communities at extra risk. I'm humbled to assist as a volunteer in this effort as a way to offer mutual aid to my community."*

### COVID-19 CRISIS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Navajo Nation are already growing at an exponential rate, nearly doubling by the day. As of April 7th there are currently 425 cases of COVID-19 and 17 confirmed deaths on the Navajo Nation, which has an on-reservation population of more than 180,000. During a town hall streamed on Facebook Navajo Nation president Johnathan Nez stated, "We feel that the United States government once again has ignored or even left out the first residents, the first people, the first citizens of this country: Indigenous people." The Navajo Nation has projected that cases will peak by mid-May.

The Navajo Nation has been very proactive in responding to COVID-19. On March 11th, two days before President Trump, the Navajo Nation declared a state of Emergency as a proactive

measure. On March 17th, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on the reservation. On the 18th the Nation closed itself to visitors. On March 20, the Nation issued a shelter-in-place order for everyone living on the reservation and imposed a curfew 10 days later. On March 23rd, the Hopi Tribe halted all tourism through its lands and reported its first known case on March 26th.

### A CRITICAL NEED

Due to a host of systemic issues, tribal communities such as Navajo and Hopi are critically at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC warns that older adults and those with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, are more likely to be severely impacted by COVID-19. These tribal communities have high numbers of elderly, diabetic, asthmatic, and cancer-afflicted individuals, putting them at a substantially elevated risk of requiring hospitalization for COVID-19. The Navajo Nation has 12 Indian Health Service facilities with a total of 170 hospital beds, 13 ICU beds, 52 isolation rooms, and 28 ventilators. Given the circumstances, the few medical facilities and resources on the Nation are likely to be severely overwhelmed in a short amount of time. As such, it is essential for the on-reservation community to stay at home to slow the spread of the virus.

Orders to "shelter in place" and remain at home, however, are exacerbating systematic social issues and placing additional strain on already under-resourced communities. The Navajo Nation and Hopi Reservation are extreme food deserts with only 16 grocery stores and small food markets that serve nearly 200,000 people.

A third of the people living on the Navajo Nation do not have electricity in their homes. Another third of the Nation's residents do not have running water in their homes. Three of the twelve Hopi Villages largely do not have running water or electricity. Economic opportunities on these reservations are scarce. Thirty-eight percent of Navajo community members live in poverty and the Navajo Nation has approximately 50 percent

unemployment. Hopi has about 60 percent unemployment.

### A MESSAGE OF HOPE

*"I know these are difficult times. But let's remember we are never alone," said Cassandra Begay, Communications Lead with the Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund, "Let's remember the important relationships we have that are always with us: the relationship below our feet. The relationship with our heart. The relationship between our breath and our Mother Earth's breath. And finally remember, this is an opportunity to be grateful for many things."*

Vanessa Tullie, the team's Buyer and Volunteer Coordinator, noted that "As this virus continues to spread across our Navajo and Hopi communities, compassion and care from volunteers will help relieve some of the disparities we are facing. We are strong, resilient, and powerful and so long as we work together and stay safe, we will make it through this pandemic." ■

Please visit our website to donate and for additional resources including volunteer & support request forms: [www.navajohopisolidarity.org](http://www.navajohopisolidarity.org)



## Solidarity in the Time of Coronavirus

*"We have seen that modern countries, despite their health and safety infrastructure, in a matter of days become a deadly and heart-rending nightmare. If this happens in those places, with the budgets that they have, what will happen if this pandemic arrives in the towns and communities made up mostly of native peoples and mestizos living in miserable conditions?"*

- *Communiqué of Joint CIPOG-EZ, FNLP & OCSS of the CNI-CIG*

In a communiqué released on March 30th, member groups of the National Indigenous Congress – Indigenous Governing Council in Guerrero, Mexico, posed this question to the world. For months besieged by narco-military violence and intimidation, they denounced the situation of increasing peril at the hands of the Coronavirus contagion. The haunting answer to their question lays bare a global economic system with no regard for life. As we witness the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic, it reveals none other than a system founded on inequality and inhumanity.

Across the United States, those of us who have resources and shelter continue to be glued to social media and news feeds as the relentless updates on the Coronavirus spill across the airwaves and the internet. Many of us cannot go to work. None of us are going to the gym, to meetings, to church, to theaters, or restaurants. We are not visiting with our friends, or even our family outside of our houses. In fact, we now may be entering some kind of Coronavirus doldrums, a slippage on our grip on what our former reality looked like. We may be worrying about a family member, or how we are going to pay rent, or what will happen if we do get sick. That said, anyone reading this is likely to have a home, access to information and modes of communication, and access to food and running water. And even if there is no hand sanitizer available in the stores, we are to be able to wash our hands. But there are so many for whom it is a challenge to take even these basic precautions. According

to UNICEF, 40% of the global population does not have running water in their homes. For many, the Coronavirus becomes just one more threat to an already tenuous existence. (Indeed, there are millions here in this country.) There are those for whom social distancing equals social isolation, danger, or starvation. Limited, shared resources make social distancing, and even regular hand washing an impossibility. And for these communities around the globe, abandoned by bad governments, displaced by the ravages of neoliberal logic, isolated, incarcerated, and otherwise besieged, the pandemic sweeping the globe is JUST ONE MORE THREAT TO SURVIVAL. I need not explain more. If you are reading this, you probably have already noted many grave injustices that this crisis reveals, the degraded morality that puts the stock market above lives, the brutal inequality of capitalism. This is not new.

Though the rhetoric of Mexico's president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is not likely to not be as brazen as that of Trump or Bolsonaro (his so-called "Fourth Transformation" is a well-polished campaign of double-speak), Mexico has been alarmingly slow to respond to the spread of the pandemic. AMLO himself continues to flout safety precautions, even as Mexican states are in various stages of lockdown. In fact, it wasn't until the 25th of March that the Mexican government announced that it would suspend non-essential activities. "It is clear that the federal government is more concerned about the impact that the Coronavirus might have on the national economy, than on the lives and health of all Mexicans," stated an announcement by Zapatista Health Promoters. Globally, hospitals lack sufficient staffing, equipment, and capacity to treat victims of this virus— and in rural indigenous Mexico, where there have never been enough resources for regular hospitalization needs, the rapid march of this contagion promises to be devastating.

But while the president was continuing his magical thinking, the Zapatista communities in resistance were taking this threat very seriously, and responding accordingly. Weeks ahead of recognition by the Mexican government of potential consequences of COVID-19 on its health systems, in the mountains and jungles of southeastern Mexico, in a communiqué released on March 16th, the Indigenous Revolutionary

Clandestine Committee – General Command of the EZLN announced a "red alert" throughout their communities, recommending "full and immediate closure of the Zapatista caracoles (centers of autonomous governance) and Centers of Resistance and Rebellion. Since that time, autonomous health promoters have been working tirelessly to distribute and share measures around handwashing, daily replacement of paliacates (bandanas used to cover faces), and social distancing, while also giving warnings about self-medication. Acknowledging the risks they run in remote rural areas, Zapatista communities are making agreements to prohibit entry of public transit and persons coming from other areas of the country and the world, and to enforce isolation (of 15-20 days) for anyone who may have been in contact with the virus. Despite projections that the height of contagion will occur between the 18th and the 25th of April, the Zapatistas are well aware that Semana Santa will find many people abandoning preventive measures, and warn that these measures must be taken seriously for weeks (and maybe more) to come.

Those of us working in solidarity with the Zapatistas over decades have witnessed the organizational capacity of the Zapatistas firsthand. We know that their prompt action sounded the alarm in indigenous communities of the CNI-CIG across Mexico. Equipped with the latest information, the autonomous communities in resistance ARE DOING EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER to keep themselves (and others) safe. But we are also aware that the scarcity of hospital infrastructure and the limitations of health care providers are challenging systems everywhere. And we see how governments around the world are responding— some with care and others with brutality. It is critical at this time, as the Zapatistas have urged, that we remain vigilant, and that we don't abandon our current struggles for life, and for our Mother Earth.

The communiqué from Guerrero not only points out the vulnerability of displaced and threatened communities to the Coronavirus contagion itself, but also to other abuses of power in the wake of its chaos. "As native peoples, we have understood that coronavirus disease is grounds to exercise control over our peoples and our territory. It seems

that the coronavirus not only goes after human health/life, but also the wealth and the peoples in resistance that still subsist in indigenous territories and the world." At this time, communities around the globe are ever-more prone to the exploitation and predation of bad governments and those who would manipulate the crisis to advance their power-and-profit-hungry schemes.

We are all experiencing consequences of the virus. Our lives have become more complicated in so many ways. This is a time for us to remember that amidst this crisis, communities marginalized and terrorized by the march of neoliberal displacement continue to struggle against oblivion — the raging contagion burning in their direction is but one more threat. In the case of Zapatistas families, they cannot allow the Coronavirus to keep them home. They must prepare their fields, haul water to their homes, collect firewood, carry out their collective responsibilities, and maintain vigilance over their communities to protect themselves from encroachment and militarization. The siege has not calmed, it has intensified.

During this amplified crisis, we have launched the Million Peso Pledge to support the Zapatista autonomous Health System. Before May 1st we plan to deliver 1 Million (or more!) Pesos to the Zapatista Autonomous Health Systems. We ask that you join us in solidarity with the sage action of the Zapatista communities, to support them in this time of grave danger. Zapatista organization + resources can go a long way to saving lives in rural Mayan Chiapas. As Zapatista communities mobilize to protect their communities in the face of this global threat, they insist that despite social distancing, we must not lose human contact, but rather temporarily change our way of knowing one another. They exhort us to "hold high the flag of the struggle for humanity." In fact, it is the expressions of creativity, compassion, generosity and solidarity with our sisters, brothers, and compañerxs around the globe that will pull us through this alive. ■

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## Eco-Fascism: The Rhetoric of the Virus

The history of eco-fascism is somewhat cloudy, but its origin draws from the previously existent eugenics movement and combines it with a form of hideous ecological disguise that aims to justify its murderous elements. The eco-fascists, more or less, are the same people Murray Bookchin described as 'self-professed deep ecologists who believe that Third World peoples should be permitted to starve to death and that desperate Indian immigrants from Latin America should be excluded by the border cops from the United States lest they burden "our" ecological resources.' While there has been a great deal of trying to dress the movement up, often with deepening appeals to the sanctity of nature, the beauty of the natural world, and the ugliness of industrial pollution, the roots of the movement are inescapable; the essence of eco-fascism is the idea that the World is sick, and the illness is humanity. Therefore the eco-fascist claims that we should do our best to eliminate as many people as necessary – or at least accept their deaths – to allow the World to 'heal'.

It would be remiss to mention this without giving a brief mention to Thomas Malthus, the 19th Century English thinker who argued that the 'power of population is so superior to the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race.' That is, he argued that there were too many people (or at least, would be too many people) in relation to available resources, causing an inevitable issue for humanity. Malthus' argument was, when boiled down to the most fundamental ingredients, that the Earth could only support so many individuals and that there needed to be some boundary put on how many individuals could be allowed to exist. Culminating in the idea that we should not seek to cure disease, should not seek to curb famine, and should encourage the poor to live in overcrowded and unsanitary environments, and that we should even 'court the return of the plague', Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* is not the first piece of eugenic writing, but is certainly one of those most responsible for popularising these perspectives.



Malthus' nonsense drew a response from early English proto-anarchist William Godwin, whose lengthy *Of Population* opens with the claim that Malthus' theory is 'evidently founded upon nothing'.

Why write about this? At least, why write about this now; isn't there a pandemic going on? Should I not be writing about that? The answer is a simple one, although malignant in its purity; with the world thrown into yet another new flavour of turmoil due to the outbreak and subsequent global spread of COVID-19, there has been an equal rise in opportunism designed primarily to take advantage of the fact that people are scared and worried. Ever the opportunists, and ever the predators of the fearful, one of the most prominent factions in this has been the far right wing, and even more specifically, the eco-fascist movement. Social media has made this even more prevalent, since messages can be distributed widely very quickly and all it takes is a single share for a piece of carefully designed propaganda to leak out from amongst one group into a much wider pool of people who will keep the message going without really being engaged with the original sentiment. It's easy for somebody to stumble into spreading fascist adjacent ideas without ever really meaning it – but more on that

later.

One of the most pernicious roots of eco-fascism is in the eugenics movement that preceded it. While there are clear differences, they are largely differences in tactics rather than sentiment; the eugenicist seeks to sacrifice given groups of individuals to the altar of genetic superiority that they have in their heads, arguing that the existence of whichever group being discussed is a flaw in the species. The eco-fascist seeks to sacrifice groups of individuals to the altar of the environment, arguing that the existence of whichever group is being discussed is a core ingredient in ecological disaster. To return to Bookchin, it can't be ignored that the groups under discussion are almost always the same in either case; the poorer people, the people of colour, the people who are differently abled.

COVID-19 has drawn much of this discussion into the public sphere. Whereas it's generally seen as poor taste to refer to groups of people as infections, diseases, and plagues – for good reason – this seems to be forgiven when the group being referred to is non-specific. Hand waving at humanity in general, as if being vague is ethical bulletproofing, gets a pass. It is relatively common today to find another

viral tweet with tens of thousands of likes gesturing towards the clearing waters of Venetian canals, or the wandering deer of Japan navigating neon-lit city centres and declaring that the Earth is healing itself; the smog-cleared skies of California receive a probing enquiry – perhaps we were the real virus all along?

Strange as though it may seem, musings of this kind have become more and more common as the weeks have gone by and the evidence of nature 'reclaiming' previously populated areas has begun to accumulate. Suffice it to say, there is more than a little of the eco-fascist ideology floating around in the assumptions of that question; when somebody asks if humanity is the 'real virus', they set up a system in which the Earth is a being and humanity a problem that needs to be solved. The solution being proposed is rarely stated outright, but it doesn't have to be because it's implicit in the question; you cure a virus by getting rid of it. Beneath the surface level wonder at seeing a wild boar shuffle across Italian cobblestones, there is a lurking belief that maybe the world would be better off without us. Or, more commonly, the world would be better off without some of us, with who that some is being left as a blank to be filled in by the subconscious of the questioner. Unquestionably, whoever that somebody is, will be someone else.

It doesn't take long to see the correlation between the eco-fascist ideal and the underlying logic of this line of reasoning.

Something that is vital to note is this; despite the fact that many of the assumptions of the 'humans are the real virus' rhetoric are shared with eco-fascists, not everyone who has spread it or internalised it is necessarily a fascist. Reality is sometimes difficult to parse, especially when so much is happening with such frequency.

The difficulty is compounded by modern media, which bombards everybody with a deluge of barely intelligible nonsense composed of equal parts guesswork, blatant lies, misrepresentations, and government stenography. The baseline intuitiveness of the eco-fascist assumptions at work are easy to understand. For an individual lacking a systematic critique but searching for answers, »

it can be easy to adopt elements of this thought this means that even people who would ostensibly baulk at the idea of outright genocide being discussed openly, such as liberals or social democrats, are able to buy into and spread the auto-virality meme without ever truly realising the dangerousness that underwrites the entire concept. So what's the trick? How can this horrible concept become so natural that even relatively pleasant individuals can spread it and accept the logic at its base?

Simply put, there has been a piece of rhetorical trickery here; a bait and switch. We are constantly being told that these apparent ecological recoveries are the result of human beings receding from the world; the more of us that are quarantined or in self-isolation, the fewer of us that there are out and about causing environmental issues. On the surface, this appears to make some kind of sense; the fact that this formulation isn't immediately and obviously nonsense is the hook that eco-fascists use to draw in even the well-meaning liberal. The trick is to realise that what has primarily changed is not humanity at all – the death toll of COVID-19 is growing, and it is both tragic and politically infuriating, but it hasn't yet killed the millions, or potentially even billions, that would be required for the change to be attributed to fewer humans. The fact is that there are almost as many human beings today as there were months ago: what has changed is the behaviour of those human beings. That is to say, what has changed, to some degree, has been our modes of social organisation.

The language of the eco-fascist claims that human beings are the problem, and that with their self-isolation – that is, their removal from the system – has come ecological recovery. Such individualised and atomised analysis prevents the ever-important systematic approach; the real problem is capitalism, and it is with the interruptions and staggerings of capitalism that recovery has come along. Deeply embedded in the language of the right wing, the misattribution of the worst elements of capitalism to the mere existence of human beings exists as a dual weapon.

Firstly, it allows them to turn their vitriol upon individuals. Which individuals are chosen as targets

is obvious beyond discussion; in this case, the virus has been racialised by members of the right as the 'Chinese Virus', a horrible formulation that has come with a rise in anti-Chinese racism and (as a simple visit to the front page of various popular newspapers will reveal) a desire to punish. This has leaked out even into supposedly left-wing and liberal discussions of the subject: a recent collection of essays published by the editorial initiative ASPO bears the name Sopa de Wuhan, (Wuhan Soup), and features essays by the usual list of left and liberal thinkers: Slavoj Žižek makes an appearance, alongside Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, David Harvey, and Franco Berardi. Secondly, it allows them to imply a connection between the two; to link the existence of capitalism to the existence of individuals and bind them together ideologically; to present capitalism as human and therefore inevitable and inescapable.

It has long been argued that one of the worst impulses of capitalism, and really the one which puts a firm cap on how long it can last, is the requirement for continual growth and expansion. Capitalism, to put it lightly, is greedy and constantly demands more; more production, larger markets, more factories, more profit, and therefore more extraction, more waste-product, more fuel burned, et cetera. When left in the hands of governments and corporations, this tendency is indulged as often and as wantonly as possible. COVID-19 is a virus, and it is not beholden to capitalism, and therefore it doesn't care that its proliferation puts a spanner in the works. People self isolate, the amount of work that's being done slows; 'it's not entirely clear how humanity would suffer were all private equity CEOs, lobbyists, PR researchers, actuaries, telemarketers, bailiffs, or legal consultants to [...] vanish', David Graeber writes in his book *Bullshit Jobs*, and mass quarantine and self-isolation has answered the unasked question: humanity would not suffer. These jobs are entirely superfluous and could be done away with; so much of the work humanity does is done purely to keep people occupied, and it has become abundantly clear that this occupation is no good for most people.

Further, with self isolation and the closing of so many workplaces, the number of cars on roads drops, the amount of fuel being burned drops, and

the result is some measure of ecological bounce-back. But we all know, and anarchists have argued for a very long time, that nobody needs to die for this kind of thing to happen. Observations that the world has begun 'recovering' since the introduction of mass quarantine would be premature – you don't 'fix' the environment in a few weeks – but it's hard to argue that visibly clearer air isn't good on at least some level. It would be entirely within the bounds of imagination to do away with millions of cars on the road in any given day and to replace them with better forms of public transport, which serve more people and vastly reduce environmental damage. The abolition of nonsense work and the re-structuring of transport are just two examples of improvements to our lives that are realistic and easy; we simply need to re-organise our society.

Slightly more than a decade ago now, British writer, theorist, and music critic Mark Fisher published his now classic book *Capitalist Realism*, an attempt to diagnose and decipher the cultural environment of modern capitalism and begin thinking about how we might escape its grasp. To cut a relatively short story – *Capitalist Realism* is a very brief work – even shorter, Fisher argues that capitalism has been perceptually fused with 'reality' in such a way that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism; that capitalism is the 'only game in town'. He also argues that one of the best ways to point out how artificial and potentially changeable this kind of social organisation is, is to look towards the un-ignorable crises that appear to rip into the fabric of capitalist realism. Fisher chose, in 2009, to use mental health issues, bureaucracy, and incoming climate catastrophe as his examples. Today, these examples loom ever larger, with mental health having been largely ignored and the horrors of apocalyptic climate change bearing down on us with an increasing rage. It is now commonplace to hear statistics claiming that vast swathes of the population have serious issues with depression, anxiety, and a host of other conditions. Similarly, it's not unusual to turn on the news or (more commonly) open up Twitter and see how yet another wildfire has ravaged yet another country, leaving smoking forests and smouldering corpses behind.



However, we can now add another example to the list of things which lift the veil and expose the levers and pulleys working behind the scenes; COVID-19 has, if nothing else, shown that a pandemic can do much the same as any wildfire. Suddenly a way of life that we were told was inescapable is swept to the side; jobs that we were told were vital become meaningless as offices and executive suites get abandoned and huge portions of the workforce either become unemployed or begin to work from home – workers that have previously been treated as scapegoats or ignored and dismissed as menial and unskilled become 'essential workers' without whom no country could stand. This is, of course, the message anarchists and the left in general have been pushing for well over a century; so much of the work we do is unnecessary, and so much of the work that is necessary is demeaned and under-compensated. Given this perspective, it becomes obvious that the eco-fascist framework in which any given human is part of a planet-wide disease is flawed at the core. Similarly, the diluted and diffused version of their discourse that gets spread around by largely well-meaning people is based on a misconception that confuses a social system with those individuals who take part in it. The outbreak of COVID-19 has, to return to Mark Fisher, thrown aside many of the claims that there is no alternative to our current system, revealing a variety of 'fractures and inconsistencies in the field of apparent reality' that make its contingency and fragility all the more obvious. Whatever the government and popular consensus might like us to think, it's impossible to look at a world where workplace populations can drop so drastically without damaging any vital services and then fail to imagine that things could be different. »

The right wing and the state has already taken advantage of this, of course; opportunists, as mentioned earlier, are on top of this kind of thing. Governments across the world have taken this opportunity to hand out enhanced police powers, to enforce lockdowns and punishments for people who might be out of their home too often; Hungary has already managed to skip straight into out-and-out dictatorship, using the pandemic as an accelerant to Orbán's bigoted fire. As the surface of political discourse shifts, forced into motion by the earthquake that has caused decades of neo-liberal consensus to show the cracks in the foundations, the right wing has taken every chance it can get to push towards its own goals; the left should do the same. Undeniably, there has already been a start; rent strikes have broken out in various countries; General Electric workers have demanded their factories be converted to build ventilators, and mutual aid networks have emerged in their hundreds. Those who consider themselves to be unconcerned with ideology have found that ideology is extremely concerned with them, and the already shaky grip that the centre has had on mainstream discourse for some time has become even more tenuous.

We cannot, however, allow ourselves to be fooled that a crisis will, with some minor coaching from a rent strike, end capitalism or the state. If any credit can be given to apparatuses such as these, it's that they have demonstrated a remarkable tenacity and the ability to worm their way into surviving nearly any disaster. Anarchists can't rely on the state to crumble under its own inadequacies; it must be pushed. Mutual aid networks are a fantastic start, despite how many of them have faced internal disruption from party political actors seeking to subvert them into hierarchical structures. The rumblings of worker solidarity found in factory walk-outs, and the backlash against landlords, too, are brilliant beginnings. But true change doesn't come with a few good signs; there must be increasing pushback against the state, and it must be continuous. COVID-19 has torn a hole in the veil of capitalist realism; what we knew for a long time – that things can be different – is now becoming common knowledge to those who have had their world rocked by this pandemic. Anarchists and other leftists cannot allow any avenue to remain unexplored, or to be reclaimed by the right; the ecological aspect is included in this.

For years, ecological catastrophe has been one of the few continually inescapable tears in capitalist hegemony. For years, it has been looming as a threat, with each news story growing increasingly alarming; scientists have been issuing dire proclamations of end-days deadlines for a long time, and there has been little reason to doubt the legitimacy of these claims. Damage caused by industrial capitalism is there for anyone to see. Visiting a beach, seeing the endless stretches of logged forest, watching species after species vanish into extinction; all of this is undeniable to anybody willing to engage legitimately with the evidence. Capitalism is at extreme contradiction with ecological sustainability. For the eco-fascist, it has been trivial to marry these obvious observations with COVID-19 to introduce a form of self-destructive hippydom; at the core of fascism lies a desire for the end – as the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze wrote, it is a 'war machine that no longer had anything but war as its object'. Usurping the language of the environmentalist, the eco-fascist sees an opportunity to mask the violence and overt misanthropy of their ideology, but is only that; a mask. Fascism is, at its core, 'a line of pure destruction', to return to Deleuze, and any attempt to claim that the true motive is environmental sustainability is transparently absurd. The only true environmentalism is liberatory.

What needs to be enforced by the anarchist movement, at every turn, is the reality of the situation: COVID-19 and the subsequent shuffling of society has not proven that humanity is a curse with which to be done away; it has proven that capitalism is nothing but a series of choices and structures that we make and reinforce everyday, and those choices can be made differently; those structures can be torn down. Claim this moment and these apparent ecological recoveries as ideological, but claim them correctly; if there is something that needs to be sacrificed for the ongoing health of the planet and its inhabitants, it's capitalism. ■

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## 'Normality' is no longer an option!

**Unless you have**, quite literally, had your head stuck in the sand for the past few weeks, you will have seen the news reports and social media posts about virulent panic buying and fights over toilet paper, which have been blamed for the empty shelves in supermarkets, the price-gouging of certain goods, and the difficult challenge that now faces many people in acquiring even the most basic of necessities at the shop. It's the usual Capitalist narrative; the dirty, poor, working-class people are too selfish and irrational to function without strong leaders or strict rules to guide them and to avert the self-destruction of society. Whilst this narrative might be appealing to those who wish to indulge in elitist feelings of contempt and self-superiority over the masses, it conveniently ignores the fact that it is not justifiably anxious people that gouge prices, it's the greedy capitalists, exploiting their anxiety, who do, and, despite first impressions, it is not panic buying that has emptied the shelves, but the capitalist systems that immediately breakdown upon any widespread deviation from 'business as usual'.

This likely will not be new knowledge to the readers of 'Organise!', but Capitalism isn't really about making sustainable, resilient systems, it's about making as much profit as possible in order to remain competitive on the market. As part of maximising their profit, businesses and corporations, in their infinite wisdom, have, in recent years, begun to rely on 'just-in-time' production. This means that, instead of keeping a reserve of the components and products on hand in case they are needed, these businesses rely on precise amounts of goods, calculated based upon the previous or predicted demand, being delivered from suppliers, often from other countries, 'just-in-time' in order to mitigate the costs of storing the goods. Unfortunately, this means that businesses are often woefully unprepared for an unexpected increase of demand; shelves in supermarkets can be rendered bare by a mere increase of £6-10 in the shopping spend per household, so it's no surprise that goods were quickly sold out as concerns regarding the coronavirus grew.

This problem is exacerbated by the lack of warehouses to store goods, particularly chilled warehouses, which are up to four times more expensive and cannot be prepared at short notice, yet vital to prevent produce from decomposing. Physically, warehouses are available, but, just as houses are, instead of being given to those who actually need them, kept empty and speculated upon, they have become enveloped into the real estate bubble and unavailable for actual use. This has been recognised as a problem since 2018, when businesses began to stockpile in preparation for a 'No-deal Brexit' and many of the remaining warehouses were already fully booked for the next six months; even some of these warehouses were empty, with Amazon having booked them in preparation for its entry into the food market in the next few months! Of course, there's nothing actually stopping the warehouses from being used, but confronting unjust property laws is something that those in power, who directly benefit from such laws, absolutely refuse to do, so they resign themselves to blaming the 'hysteria' shown by us common folk instead of resolving the actual issue that they have created.

More difficulties in ensuring shelves are stocked have been created by the capitalist tendency towards ever-increasing centralisation. For example, many businesses, including supermarkets, have drastically reduced their number of distribution centres over the years, and have outsourced distribution to logistics companies; Tesco supplies 3,700 stores with only 25 distribution centres, representing nearly 150 stores for every distribution centre. Some readers may remember the massive uproar on social media two years ago when 750 of KFC's 900 stores in the UK were forced to close; this closure was a result of this centralisation and outsourcing of distribution as it was made necessary after KFC's delivery partner, DHL, struggled to deliver chicken to the stores from its single distribution centre. Unfortunately for businesses, whilst centralisation might be a great way to cut costs, it also creates points of vulnerability within the system, which becomes prone to collapse the moment a single link in the chain fails. Sometimes, centralisation occurs 'naturally' as the result of the 'invisible hand of the market'; this process, called 'monopolisation', occurs as big companies force smaller competitors out of the market »

and gradually accumulate more and more wealth and power. Monopolisation is also playing a role in stopping shelves from being filled as, with only two companies sharing more than half of the UK's bread market, and a quarter of pre-made sandwiches being made by a single manufacturer, companies were already operating at full capacity, even before any excess demand arose!

Globalisation is also a factor that have left supermarkets unable to cope as supermarkets and other businesses are now reliant upon global markets to supply goods. In the early 1980s, the UK produced approximately 78% of its staple foods, but it now imports nearly half of its food from abroad, with some food even being sent to other countries to be processed before being sent back to almost the exact same place where they came from, creating pollution and supply-line issues all for the sake of saving money on production! This reliance on global markets has proven to be especially foolish in the face of the coronavirus pandemic as borders have closed and airlines have been forced to remain grounded, in some cases collapsing entirely; the share of food transported by air has increased by 140% since the 1990s, and the majority of this food is stored on tourist flights, so, with tourism on hold, an entire transport link has been rendered inoperable. The closure of borders and grounding of flights are also preventing foreign agricultural workers, who compose 98% of fruit-pickers, from entering the country; unless 90,000 positions can be filled at short notice, the majority of British fruit and vegetables are now expected to be left to rot in the fields! Meanwhile, individual people have also been forced to become dependent on these global markets that have now failed them; even amongst those who have managed to find the time (and money), between multiple jobs, unpaid overtime, and the daily commute, to learn to grow their own food, they often find themselves unable to become even partly self-sufficient as most commercial seeds are imported from other countries and unadapted to British conditions, or are hybrids who often fail to produce fertile seeds, and whose surviving offspring are unable to grow true!

In addition, because of their own, insatiable need for an ever-growing profit, employers have not provided their workers with working conditions that would allow them to work healthily, effectively and



sustainably. Even if we ignore the fact that employers, in order to maintain a strict hierarchy, have insisted upon implementing top-down management, instead of bottom-up workplace democracy, which has been proven to be more effective as the workers who have direct, day-to-day experience in a workplace know how to operate it in the best way possible, the disempowering, unsanitary and often directly dangerous conditions that employers force upon their workers have greatly impeded their ability to supply the country's needs. In food-processing factories, which, as mentioned earlier, already operate at full capacity at the best of times, there is no physical space for extra staff to help supply the additional demand, and the lines are severely overcrowded; with the importance of physical distancing stressed by epidemiologists, it is not difficult to understand why these crowded nature of these factories may be creating issues in the midst of a global pandemic. Additionally, poor working conditions have deterred workers from entering a transport industry that is now more vital than ever.

In 2015, it was predicted that 150,000 new truck drivers would be needed by 2020, yet a severe shortfall remains as many drivers have left the industry, disillusioned by the surveillance systems that forbid them from taking a well-deserved break, the incompetent bureaucracy of middle-managers that get a power-trip from being unnecessarily cruel, as well as the long shifts that only get longer and longer, and potential, new drivers are deterred from entering the industry as the lowered pay no longer justifies the time and money required to get the necessary qualifications; with the average age of the remaining truck drivers being 53 years, and 13% of them being over 60 years old, the skewed

demographics of truck drivers has the potential to create further problems if the coronavirus spreads amongst them. Poor working conditions in these industries have created shortages and dangerous situations that have had, or will have, at least some impact on the ability of supermarkets to remain supplied with a sufficient amount of goods.

Finally, although it is the fault of Capitalism for leaving food industries unprepared for a rise in demand, and, as this article has hopefully proven to you, its effects have been greatly over-exaggerated, panic-buying ultimately did create the rise in demand to begin with. But, can we really say that Capitalism is entirely innocent in this particular manner? It may be cathartic to complain about, or to poke fun at, the people who are stockpiling food and toilet rolls, but perhaps a profound sadness at what constant alienation and anxiety can do to people in these situations, or perhaps an intense rage at the system that creates such alienation, is a far more appropriate response. Can we really blame people for panic-buying when they already have dealt with years of insecurity, when the community connections that, in the past, would have supported them have been destroyed by years of austerity and gentrification, when society has become increasingly more atomised and 'survival of the fittest' touted as its mode of operation, and when consumerism has led to the purchase of goods being some people's sole source of solace, comfort and reassurance? Instead of attacking people for a rational response to an irrational situation, we should be attacking the capitalist and authoritarian systems that have made them feel so desperate and helpless!

Is there an alternative, or is the coronavirus simply, as some politicians have claimed, a crisis that would have overwhelmed us in any situation? The fact that countries such as South Korea and Vietnam have managed to control the spread of the virus, even without the need for a lockdown, proves that a crisis of this scale was not inevitable and that those in power have, through their inaction, greed and failures, made themselves responsible, not only for empty supermarket shelves, but for thousands of lost lives as well. But how might an Anarchist society prevent shortages of goods, and ensure that everyone has reliable access to basic necessities throughout a pandemic? Following a well-established Anarchist

tradition, I refuse to prescribe any exact blueprint for a future society, but I will briefly offer some ideas on how an Anarchist society might cope better in this situation:

**Firstly**, any good Anarchist society would ensure that people do not suffer from the alienation that they suffer from now; with strong community connections, and happy, fulfilling lives, people would be less likely to feel the need to panic-buy and would be more inclined to discuss with neighbours the best course of action to take to ensure that everyone had their needs met throughout the pandemic. **Secondly**, people and communities would be more self-sufficient, having access to the land, time and resources to grow crops from healthy, locally sourced seeds (community gardening is already a staple activity of anarchists, so it is not difficult to imagine it being a prominent feature of an anarchist society), and any transport that remained necessary would have a much better supply of workers, who, making the decisions directly amongst themselves, would no longer have to suffer from abusive, exploitative working conditions and would work because they enjoyed it, or because they agreed with their community about the benefits of a shifting rota allocating people to do necessary work fairly; the improved working conditions would also help stop the spread of any pathogen due to the improved hygiene of workplaces, and would ensure that workers are healthy and able to perform their tasks reliably and effectively. In addition, production and distribution would be decentralised, increasing the overall capacity, ensuring that production in each location is optimised to the conditions of that area and preventing any individual distribution centre or manufacturer from being overburdened! **Finally**, instead of aiming for the maximisation of profits, people would aim for the well-being of all; just-in-time production would be confined to the garbage-heap of history, and people would follow the old, common-sense adage of 'saving up for a rainy day', by ensuring that reserves of goods would be kept, in case of emergencies, in warehouses, which, expropriated from their previous owners, would no longer sit empty to be speculated upon.

**A better world is possible, and, as proved by the failure of Capitalism to meet people's needs in this time of crisis, 'Normality' is no longer an option! ■**

## The politics of pandemic

"I found a stock of masks that was available and Americans – I'm not talking about the American government – but Americans, outbid us, ... They offered three times the price and they proposed to pay upfront. I can't do that. I'm spending taxpayers' money and I can only pay on delivery having checked the quality... So we were caught out."

**Those were the** words of Valérie Pécresse (the president of the Île-de-France region, which includes Paris) in an interview with BGMTV as she discussed the critical lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in hospitals last month. Shortly after, the French weekly L'Express reported that Paris, which has requisitioned all masks amid the shortage, seized stock from Swedish producer Molnlycke that was headed for Spain and Italy.

The reality is that the USA, like much of the world discovered too late that they were unprepared, as doctors and nurses were forced to work in bin bags, they had to do something radical to save face. The solution was to spit all over their own free market bullshit.

At the start of April the Trump administration ordered 3M, a Minnesota-based manufacturer, to stop exporting protective masks to Canada and Latin America on Thursday. Trump has invoked the Defence Production Act to stop exports of critical equipment which allows the state to dictate the manufacturing and distribution processes of private companies.

It didn't stop there, true to form the belligerent behemoth took to piracy and economic force to cover up the failures of the Trump government. They began outbidding on PPE being shipped in from elsewhere. Shipments destined for Canada turn up light, Trudeau making it clear in a statement that the US has simply paid a higher price during transit and left their partners in the lurch. The Germans were similar done over when the USA seized 200,000 N95 masks mid transfer in Thailand.

Commenting to RTL radio regarding how American officials had swooped on a Chinese airport to take away a plane load of masks that France had ordered. Dr Jean Rottner described the methods they are using:

**"On the tarmac, the Americans arrive, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders"**

The nature of the international mask trade right now is clear. We're seeing spy agencies such as Israel's Mossad enlisted to secure coronavirus testing kits (as reported by La Figaro) and wilf scenarios as the one described by Peter Pellegrini, prime minister of Slovakia until just a few days ago, who told a Slovakian TV channel "We were already preparing cash worth 1.2 million euros in a suitcase. We planned to use a special government flight and go get the masks ... However, a dealer from Germany came there first, paid more for the shipment, and bought it".

We're not special either, I'm told by government insider that "boxes of PPE landed in Heathrow, due for the DHSC to go to NHS stockpiles and were recalled. They never left Heathrow. Everyone on our side was fuming" The PPE was already paid for and tracked, none the less, they were re-called mid flight. So much for international solidarity eh?

Perhaps one could forgive a desperate state taking desperate measures, however we have to remember that they see the world through the lens of capitalism. In a press briefing last week the Trump administration confirmed that they were in fact giving these very stockpiles to private distributors who would then sell the PPE in, as the questioning reporter had described, "Ebay style auctions". Their defence was simply that these corporations had more capacity to distribute across some 600 warehouses.

The reality is that hospitals and services that serve poor communities, have no chance of keeping adequate supplies. We're seeing "mask deserts" where entire regions are suffering critical lack of PPE while affluent and high

prestige areas (as well as private enterprises) have no concern. Once more the class disparity and inherent racism in the state logistics of the USA become all too painfully clear.

This self serving attitude is especially problematic for small nations such as Barbados who had a shipment of ventilators seized despite having been paid for and places such as Cuba and Pakistan than still remain the victim of embargos. Foreign governments using the working classes as political collateral in their ongoing political pissing contests.

### Back in blighty?

It's no better.

The Department of Health outright rejected advice from Nervtag, in 2016/7 to renew stockpiles of PPE because it would be too expensive. Nervtag were established the

review government policy and provide recommendations in case of a influenza pandemic, however in a meeting in June 2017 They were told by Jeremy Hunt to "reconsider" their formal recommendations due to as a health department official present stated "the very large incremental cost of adding in eye protection."

A minute from the meeting stated that "a subsequent internal DOH economic assessment has revealed that following these recommendations would substantially increase the cost of the PPE component of the pandemic stockpile four-to six-fold, with a very low likelihood of cost-benefit based on standard thresholds."

The cost-benefit there refers to the fact that providing adequate eye protection to NHS staffers was deemed a bit costly. »



The direct result of this three years later is the deaths of over a dozen NHS doctors and nurses, sacrificed to Tory cost cutting measures. Nervtag also advised that intensive care units (ICUs) should be designated "hot spots" carrying out aerosol generating procedures. Therefore, FFP3 respirators "should be recommended for all staff at all times in these areas when a patient with pandemic influenza is present". Meanwhile we have dozens of reports of NHS staff having to buy their own, battling the ever inflating prices with one nurse in Yorkshire telling the Guardian she had to spend £100 to buy a FFP3 respirator online.

Now of course the government is scrambling for PPE, caught out by their lethargic response to a looming pandemic only too late did they realise the situation, now the government tenders site is full of emergency requests for respirators, eye protection, gowns and body bags.

Their deepest fear is being caught out in their lies and cost cutting. They fear the bad press caused by such horrific revelations as the three nurses stateside who were forced



to wear bin bags for PPE and who are now all ill with Covid -19. Even as similar stories pour in here, even those that have ended in death, the government is in deep denial. Last Sunday Hancock said that 5.7% of hospital doctors were off sick or absent because of Covid-19, however the Royal College of Physicians held a survey of more than 2,500 medics found the rate was almost three times that – 14.6%.

### Protect the NHS?

Of course now they've had a few weeks to get their act together, now they want to praise the NHS, tell us they care. The repeated lies and manufactured mythos of a Tory part on the side of the NHS, alongside sympathy for Boris, seemingly earning them the favour of the house bound votership. This is utterly laughable considering they have been such prominent agents in its destruction. Over the past thirty years we've seen successive Labour and Tory governments undermine the NHS, seeing the number of beds halved and countless jobs discarded. Most recently we've seen the ever growing threat of full privatisation begin slicing the NHS apart with huge chunks of its operation sold to the highest bidder,

farmed out for private tender so corporations can get fat on the labours of the national treasure. It's nothing but an utter disgrace. **The bastards laughed, clapped and cheered as they blocked a pay rise for nurses.**

To help us in forgetting the past few years with Brexit exiling thousands of staff and disgusting racist policies sending home yet more, the government have doubled down on their ersatz solidarity. "Protect the NHS" indeed.

More like treat our doctors and nurses like sacrificial lambs to the slaughter, let them die a noble death protecting the community just as long as no one things to blame the government for their critical lack of support and essentially kneecapping the service. To aid this new narrative they've started portraying our doctors and nurses as soldiers, giving their lives in the "war against Covid 19". We've seen over a dozen NHS workers die during the pandemic and they've been held up as "front-line heroes", warriors who willfully gave their lives to save us all. It's a lie in the truth and political spin bullshit to displace the truth.

They are using the language of military stoicism to make their deaths lamentable self sacrifice instead of what they actually are which is entirely preventable results of systematic undermining by a state which has persistently chosen to restrict the funding of the NHS over actually providing them with the means to save lives. They want us to forget that our doctors and nurses are dying because they didn't care to support them... they want them to become simply numbers, an anonymous figure they can list of those who died fighting Covid 19.

Each death should be sending ripples of revolutionary rage across the country but instead with been corralled into the grim acceptance, "people die in war, thoughts and prayers, nothing can be done. Oh well".

This separation from reality and projection of war time self sacrifice is infectious mind and it's not just the cabal at the top of the

Tories, were seeing the same in reports from the BBC and in the tabloids, heck even Queenie references Vera Lynne in her speech and across the pond Trump stands at a podium and makes the same pantomime;

**"You watch them and they are putting their outfits on , putting their masks on and it's incredible. It's like no different than you watch the war movies, the old clips of war – running up hills, to me it's the same thing."**

It's a powerful narrative that parasites can call upon to stir up some sense of duty in the proles they were quite happy to sacrifice to herd immunity. Early on in the crisis the shortage of workers was concerning farmers, hoisted on their own petard, they found themselves without a wealth of foreigners to abuse all day for shit pay. They began a campaign to recruit volunteers for the now jobless British population, when that didn't work they petitioned for more flights to bring eastern European workers over, now as they empty milk into drains and letting veg rot they are calling the campaign to hire housebound Brits "the land army".

Remember that this is the government that was quite seriously considering doing very little to stymie the spread and once again weighting up protecting people vs damage to the economy. Until early March Cummings and co we're looking to sacrifice a projected 250,000 people, in a policy which would, as Boris would describe to Philip Schofield as "... perhaps you could take it on the chin, take it all in one go and allow the disease, as it were, to move through the population...". Ofcourse this was before Hancock actually listened to some specialists and managed to get the crew to instigate social distancing and lock down policies, bringing the projected deaths down to 20,000. It was only at the end of March they began robust testing after much pressure and the numbers tested remain depressingly low.

Even this was presented in a politically wet manner, the threat Covid-19 presented »

undermined, that if we got ill we'd only have to spend 7 days in isolation (the W.H.O. advise being 14 days at the time). Don't get worried at all, we don't want to hurt the economy too much eh? The subsequently national holiday saw Snowden break records, nothing to worry about tho eh, it's not all that bad, they've not even said wear a mask! ... the job done. We went into lock down.

### **It's time to blame the working class!**

By week two this came with a sickening implication that it's the public who go outside during lock down who are killing the doctors and nurses. Why aren't you supporting the troops they bleat, while Hancock gets caught out on TV having not even bothered to caught how many nurses had died. Don't blame the consistent undermining of the state, it's Steve whose popped to the shop for a none essential item whose to blame. The Met. police have been inundated with snitches dobbing in people walking down the road or stopping for a breather.

The papers are full of sub bathers being shamed while flights continue to come in, their passengers heading unchecked down onto public transport on their journey home. As we stand 2 meters apart to head into the shops were working with cling film screens between us and workers on job sites up and down the land having the concerns about PPE and no social distancing dismissed by the bosses are "wet" and "fear mongering" meanwhile Transport for London alone has lost atleast ten members of staff. Call centres act as a breeding ground for contamination, and the construction sites are still open. The working class ever expendable exposed to risk to keep their money flowing while the upper management work from home scratching their arse on zoom, slightly more valuable to capitalists as they are.

Overwhelming it's women on the front lines too, occupying the majority of healthcare and service industry roles as the residue social reality of centuries of enforced social division continue to sow discord, or that early figures suggest

that black and minority ethnic members of our community are over represented in the figures of infected and dead. No, we don't have to talk about that because Steve's nipped out to Daves for a none essential bag of grass and some coppa has been breathed on, the latter incident resulting in a summary sentence of 3 months banged up as examples need to be made.

The cops new found powers to stop and hassle anyone they fancy has been taken to, shall we say, over zealously with countless reports of harassment for perceived offences. The threat of imprisonment and huge fine used to control people with fear. Sure we should be maintaining isolation and sure people have ignored the threat, but to use the threat of violence to impose the states will? No, that isn't OK.

What adds to this disturbing series of events if just how much they are being applauded. The hostility and rage spewing out from social media on anyone who steps out of line is sickening and all to quickly we have people celebrating the police using drone to track people and CCTV vans driving through parks. Justice has been summary and the punishments utterly disproportionate to the offense. This new was of draconian authourity has entierly embraced the digital age too with Google utilising its tracking features to monitor peoples movements and provide data on where people congregate to officials and policy makers.

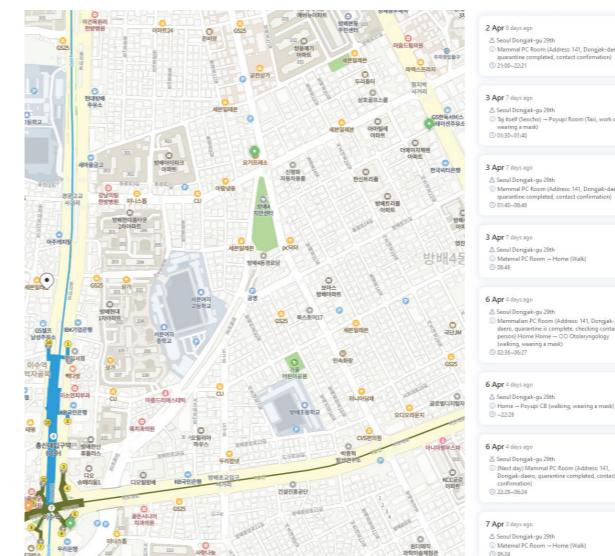
In South Korea several websites have sprang up so you can check how close you've been to someone with Covid-19. These sites use information from the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) and pin point visited locations and travel routes of people diagnosed with coronavirus using a color for each patient.

This is by no means a solitary example of how the desire to collecting data under the guise of "security" is inflicting very real threat to basic liberty. On March 17th, Israel's Netanyahu approved a very broad set of surveillance

measures which he described himself as "invasive". In Iran, people were instructing to download an APP called AC19. It pretended to be a diagnosis tool but was infact malware beaming their real time location to the state. Given that Iran is currently in a state of near civil war it's easy to see how this data could be weaponised. In Taiwan it's mobile tracking they've labelled an "electronic fence", Poland? Send in a selfie to prove you are in quarantine. In Austria they are mass monitoring peoples movements via telecom networks as are Italy, Belgium and Germany. The UK government is deep in talks with the likes of Google, O2 and EE to mass collect tracking data and the NHSX, the digital arm of the NHS, are developing a contact tracing app, It'll be opt-in but that's moot when everyone is playing snitch and the social obligation to download and play along with be overwhelming.

Meanwhile pundits on the TV are now asking how long we're going to keep hurting the economy by protecting vulnerable members of our communities and when it's not about the economy we have the emotional black mail such as this charmer from Graham Medley;

**'We will have done three weeks of this lock down so there's a big decision coming up on 13 April. In broad terms are we going to continue to harm children to protect vulnerable people, or not?'**



That's right, why aren't you thinking of the kids at a time when we're heading into the projected height of the death toll. This unsettling narrative pushing us all to "get on with it" is going to lead to an second wave if we rush back into protecting the economy from it's own lack of redundancy.

Pretty soon the same parasites who laid off thousands will be blowing their own trumpet and talking about how they're offering jobs and helping the economy. #ClapforBoris for getting us through it eh? Now, download the app and get back to work, aren't you happy to get out of the house? We got through it together didn't we? The stoking of nationalism fever already well in effect and at the end of the day only serving to keep the capitalism thriving. We've already seen independent and small businesses shut up shop (especially pubs and cafes) as the market leaders continue on strong, ever increasing their market dominance and reducing competition into a handful of corporations who control pretty much everything, much as we saw in the food industry over the last 25 years. Remember to that the DOW had its best day since 1933 closing 2,112.98 points higher — or more than 11% — at 20,704.91. Meanwhile, Somerset Capital Management, which Rees-Mogg has a 15% stake in, said that the crisis was a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity to profit from stocks in emerging markets such as Brazil and South Africa. Someone sure is suffering here and it ain't the toffs.

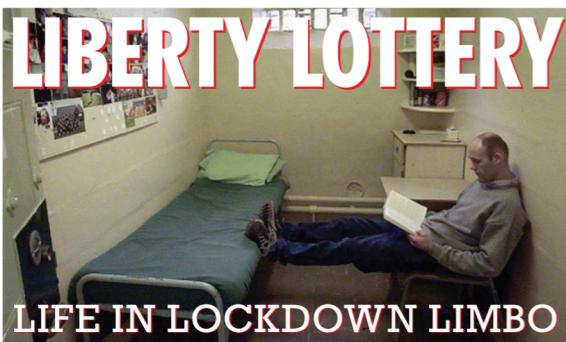
The questions now are whether or not we'll let them get away with this murder and the theft of liberty?

Will we forget the austerity policies of parasites and how they used fear to enforce a police state?

Will we act as the memory of a working class who are tired of being chewed up and spat out, neither forgiving nor forgetting? ■

**That choice is yours.**

Peter Ó Máille



WE ARE ALL facing an uncertain future as an end to this virus features nowhere on the near horizon. The fabric of our everyday lives has changed from one of routine and normality to uncertainty and fear.

Many of you are doing the right thing by staying home and perhaps for the first time experiencing (to some extent) the loss of freedom that comes with your liberty being curtailed. I think we can all agree that it ain't a barrel of laughs as cabin fever kicks in and you can't fuck off down the pub for a session with your pals to alleviate the week's stresses and strains.

Spare a thought then for those who are languishing in our prisons, detention centres and mental homes. While already under lockdown and in some cases stuck in already overcrowded, outdated prisons and institutions, many will be in almost solitary confinement. Visits from loved ones have been cancelled as the authorities attempt to stop the virus spreading. They won't be getting out and it certainly isn't a walk in the park. Some lucky individuals are being released early, but mostly to free

up space as the courts and judiciary have come to a grinding halt other than in a very few cases.

A lot of those being released have no family or support network. Imagine being released from a long term inside into a society that is on lockdown. What a total headfuck that must be. Having to move into a bail hostel with another set of restrictions and rules must throw up a whole new set of challenges as you try to adjust to your newly won "freedom".

Now I know some you may be thinking "fuck 'em - why should I give a shit about a bunch of wrong 'uns?" But we know the kinda folk that read *Class War* have a bit more nousse about them than your average *Sun* or *Daily Fail* reader. As someone once said, "We can judge a society on how it treats its prisoners." While there are undoubtedly some proper horrible fuckers behind bars, there are many that are victims of circumstance or indeed inside for political reasons that deserve not to be forgotten.

Then there are the people – myself included – who are currently on bail awaiting their day in court.

THE GENERAL SPIRIT of demobbed soldiers was that "they got us into the war and we had dig them out of it", resulting in a massive Labour victory. People who had fought for six years – my dad – were not going to go back to feeling inferior to their "bettters". A new spirit of "we're as good as they are" was pervasive in the working class. Flanagan and Allen provided the mood music.

One result was a mass squatting movement by demobbed soldiers and their families, involving hundreds of thousands seizing empty houses and ministry of defence buildings.

**Now we must also adopt a NO GOING BACK attitude. Are all of our working class heroes who have sacrificed so much – bus drivers, nurses, shop assistants, cleaners etc etc – going to go weekly back to the status quo and the huge wealth divide?**

A wealth divide which rewards those with inherited wealth, the bankers and property developers against those who do all the work. Rewarding those who keep luxury flats empty as investments; rewarding those who would build separate entrances for cleaners and nurses in the obscenity of poor doors segregation. Is this what we're fucking dying for?

There are thousands of empty properties in London and elsewhere. A massive new squatting movement would show that we ain't going back.

So after the lockdown is over and the street parties blaze on like VE Night, we need a massive action based on NO GOING BACK. Something like a general strike the week after lockdown ends.

*If not us, who? If not now, when? Social justice for all.*



## THE CORONA FILES



### No cure for conspiracy theorists

HAVE YOU NOTICED how those irritating conspiracy theorists polluting the web with their drivel about the virus and 5G masts all seem to have something in common?

No, not the narcissism. Or the white privilege. Or the misogyny, arrogance, anti-Semitism, relentless racism, cultish use of language, self-importance and other traits associated with this nauseating collection of incels, religious loons and tedious new-age wankers.

What I'm talking about here is the fact that they're never into just one conspiracy. This tragic affliction ensures that the victim has to pretty much have a full house of idiotic beliefs that they'll perpetually feel the need to share with anyone unfortunate enough to meet them online or at an Extinction Rebellion healing workshop.

So this means that almost all of them will be anti-vaxxers, as that particular idiocy sits towards the middle of their sliding scale of fuckwittiness. A scale which swings between Jewish bankers controlling all of finance to shape-shifting lizards controlling our minds with invisible rays.

One thing which anti-vaxxers all seem to share is a cost-free investment in their beliefs: they tend to hail from backgrounds that ensured their measles jab was free at the point of need when they were kids.

But all that changes now. Now science matters, even to these moronic mystics. Recent history tells us that corona is just the latest in a succession of potentially deadly viruses that we can expect more of.

Fortunately, science will soon deliver a vaccine for corona and whatever comes next. So it is perhaps comforting to know that there is one group of annoying bastards who will be kind enough to permanently remove themselves from our spaces while simultaneously proving that Darwin was actually onto something.

## SUN DOWN

### Tory red top's days are numbered

For decades, the Murdoch owned-press has tried to hoodwink the working class by encouraging us to vote Tory or New Labour. In that time *The Sun* has been at the forefront with its racist and sexist bile, its demonisation of people on benefits and its encouragement of hating anyone different. It lied about Hillsborough, it supported Thatcher in her attacks on the miners and unions, it supported murder on the high seas when the UK sank the Argentine vessel the Belgrano.

**But now *The Scum* is in big trouble. We knew we'd outlive them.**

In February its owners



reported losses of £68m. And since then its sales will have been drastically affected by the virus pandemic. Meanwhile its owners have a legal bill of £27m after their reporters hacked the phone of the family of Milly Dowler, a murdered teenager. *The News of the World* had to close as a result of that disgusting breach of privacy. It's hard to imagine a more unpleasant organisation than Murdoch's empire of politically motivated Tory-loving bastards prowling for ways to make the lives of people already suffering much, much worse.

*Class War* remains independent, free and is growing daily. *The Sun* is selling badly, is in massive debt and advertising money is falling. Let's hope it's enough to see that pathetic rag destroyed once and for all.

## Covid-19 and Crisis-20

The world is in the middle of a crisis, a breakdown of the normal functioning of society. The outbreak of a viral contagion has led to the prospect of casualties on the scale of the 1918 flu pandemic. This might seem serious enough, but politicians and policy makers are also worried about another crisis – this time an economic one. This fear is justified. Many businesses are likely to fail, with many more people losing their jobs. Financial analysts predict falls in GDP on a scale worse than the 2008 recession, unemployment is already rising rapidly and nearly 1 million people claimed Universal Credit in the last two weeks. These economic effects of the pandemic are being treated as inevitable consequences, as if they followed natural laws as surely as the replication of a virus. We disagree. A viral pandemic at the scale we are seeing does not have to produce an economic breakdown or general destitution. That in this society it does, requires explanation.

### An external shock, for once ...

No society would be unaffected economically by a natural disaster<sup>1</sup>, especially one whose effects are widespread, as in the case of a pandemic. The extent of the disruption will differ greatly though, depending on which society we are talking about. For much of human history the level of productivity has been so low that a large part of the population has had to work long and hard just to produce basic necessities. In such a situation, a large proportion of people who work in production falling ill or otherwise becoming unable to work would threaten the entire society's ability to reproduce itself. Successful capitalist societies only require a small number of people to produce these basic necessities. For example, 1.5% of the UK workforce works in agriculture, producing 61% of the food consumed in the country. Or to put it in another way, the capitalist mode of production is so productive that it can afford to provide for David Graeber to moralise about what jobs are "bullshit".<sup>2</sup>

Of course, just because a small fraction of people suffices to produce significant wealth, this does not imply that these people can easily be replaced by other people should they fall ill or should a sudden expansion in the production of a particular class of products be required. In any society, some roles require skills and

training, and some products are incredibly specialised. A pandemic could therefore produce a temporary shortage of some goods even in a well organised economy. While the capitalist mode of production famously lacks such central coordination, we are already seeing how quickly companies are retooling production to make masks, hand sanitisers and ventilators. Granted, recruiting specialised roles such as intensive care nurses takes longer, a problem that's exacerbated by the chronic state of lack of funding and staffing for the NHS. However, while this gives cause to worry about the availability of medical care, this is not what is meant when commentators worry about an economic crisis.

Modern capitalist societies have the capacity to produce enough goods for the everyday material and non-material needs of their people, even when some kind of natural disaster occurs. Why then should something like COVID-19 threaten to leave so many more people unable to meet their needs? The generally agreed upon analysis is this. Illness and subsequent quarantine measures have slowed down production in China, impacting on global supply chains, which companies around the world rely on for their own production. This in itself would present an economic concern – in economic jargon, a supply shock. This is however not the primary concern – what is inspiring more fear is a demand shock. Outside of food and other necessities, social distancing means people are not buying stuff, many types of retail businesses (shops, cafes, bars) are being ordered to close or are otherwise restricted (airlines), production sites are standing still and so do not make purchases either. People not consuming things is the problem, not for them but for the businesses selling to them. These businesses then fire their workers, depriving them of their wages which they need to access basic necessities, a fact which is discussed as further exacerbating the demand shock. Some people not consuming enough leads to other people not being able to consume.

This is a profoundly weird result for a society to wind up with, but it reveals something about the relation between production and consumption under the capitalist mode of production: consumption is a means for the production of profit.<sup>3</sup> Rather than the economy providing people with what they need, apparently people consuming what they can must provide for the economy. Means and end are the wrong way

around. As crassly as they put it, this is what Trump and supposedly Cummings made reference to when they pondered just letting old people die to avoid an economic slow down. Populations serving the economy is also the premise for calculations of governments across the globe.

### ... and the state reacts accordingly

The capitalist freedom to ignore and thus exploit the needs of others is premised on significant social wealth and high productivity, which allows for speculative production decisions (that the eventual product will be successful) without threatening the survival of society when those speculations go wrong. The speculative decision to turn wheat into either bread or a beverage based on a slide deck cobbled together by some market analyst is only an option when the success or failure of this enterprise has no significant impact on the ability of society to reproduce itself. At certain times – and the coronavirus pandemic is a good example – this margin for error can look decidedly shaky.

Given this threat to the ability of society to reproduce itself, at the time of writing, many states are considering nationalising or directing certain industries, either in terms of what they produce or who they must sell it to, in order to ensure that some necessary products are available. The much vaunted ability of the market to provide is faltering, and a degree of central planning becomes an acceptable option. States and commentators calculate with magnitudes of useful things (how many ventilators or masks are needed) rather than Pounds Sterling. Yet, by acting in this way states are not giving up on the capitalist mode of production as the basis for their power. Rather they are taking action to shore up their societies, and the economies on which they have made themselves dependent. This is not in principle an unusual approach. States often become the provider of goods or services they judge are necessary and which private producers cannot or will not supply (at an affordable price) – healthcare being a common example. What is unusual is the extent to which and the speed at which it is being considered.

That these measures are stopgap measures rather than the new normal can be observed from the other interventions. In addition to infringing on the freedom of the economy by providing a coordination that

the market will not, states are also providing money to businesses and individuals in the form of loans, debt payment deferral, worker retention schemes, tax reliefs and benefits. What is particularly notable is that this approach differs from the response to the financial crisis of 2008, which saw state credit mobilised to buy financial assets but little emphasis was put on maintaining the status quo in the rest of society. In contrast, the strategy of states now can be characterised as "hibernate": put a pause on economic activity, mobilise significant state credit to keep social relations as they were – wage hierarchies intact, employment relations in place – and hope that the economy takes off where it stopped, as if once the pandemic is under control all will return to normal.

There are two things to note about this approach. First, that "normal" was one where the longest stock market boom in history was propped up by continued (post)-2008-crisis interventions and preventive measures by central banks. The success of the plan to see rapid economic expansion afterwards is thus uncertain. Second, and more importantly, after the crisis companies will have to produce economic successes to justify and pay off their new debt burden, in addition to their existing pre-crisis debts, and to produce the "V" upturn everybody is hoping for. This means: pressing more performance out of their employees at reduced costs, i.e. wages, to maximise profits.<sup>4</sup>

The Gross Domestic Product, the thing that measures economic growth, is a brutal abstraction that adds up all monetary results of production and services. The economy expanding after the crisis does not mean that losers (companies going under, self-employed people losing their business, workers losing pay or their jobs) are not produced. It also does not mean that the usual losers, i.e. workers, are not producing that expansion. On the contrary, they will have to, and for this purpose they are being fed during the crisis. The silver lining being that those breaking their backs might be in for a round of applause, some of them might even be able to sweat for the nation with newfound pride as "key workers".

Fuck this shit. ■

# COMMON MESSAGE OF ANARCHIST FEDERATIONS IN SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

## AGAINST WAR, FASCISM, NATIONALISM AND RACISM SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

We are in the middle of a huge humanitarian and an unprecedented social crisis, as the spread of the global pandemic is revealing in the most emphatic way the state and capitalism's criminal nature. On one hand, the social majority is facing new and yet harsher terms of exploitation and repression. On the other hand, the state is defending its power and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the bosses, by expanding the state of emergency and depriving society from the necessary resources to deal with this disaster. In this condition, thousands of immigrants and refugees are piled up in concentration camps under horrible living conditions, without any available means of protecting themselves against the pandemic. The state of exception imposed on them leads to their extermination and consists a state and capitalist crime.

War and fascism are the only "response" the system can give to its own deep and total crisis, to its own contradictions that result from its basic principle – the oppression and exploitation of one human being by another.

At a global level, the political and economic bosses are attempting an unconditional attack against the people of the capitalist periphery through war, military operations, subversion of regimes and enforcement of new ones, aiming to control whole areas, sources of wealth, even whole populations. This is a condition in which millions of people are condemned to poverty, sickness and forced immigration as a prerequisite for ensuring the over-accumulation of wealth in the hands of global financial elites and for the rearrangement of geopolitical balance of power in the context of international competitions between global, regional and local powers.

The thousands of dead refugees and immigrants at land and sea borders, all those locked up in modern concentration camps under abject conditions, those imprisoned in a racist state of exception, are the effects of the murderous anti-immigration "deterrence" policies and the building of Fortress-Europe.

The "walls" that are raised are not only useful for keeping the outcasts, the "surplus populations", out of Europe by all means, but also to promote the fascistization of western societies, to establish a condition of fear, control and hate, aiming at the acceptance of their exploitation by the bosses.

Against the bankrupt world of the state and capital, against the war declared by the dominants on the repressed of this world, as anarchists, we struggle with class and internationalist solidarity as our weapon, promoting the organization of the counterattack of the exploited for the destruction of this decayed world. Locals, immigrants and refugees, all together, let's fight from below against poverty, impoverishment, repression, subjugation, let's strengthen and defend all fields of social and class resistance targeted by repression and organize new ones. Against fascism, intolerance, war, repression and exploitation, the cause of global Social Revolution, of building a new society of solidarity, equality and freedom on the ruins of the world of authority...is always alive!

**NO CONCENTRATION CAMPS  
DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS AND FREE  
MOVEMENT FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS  
LET US TEAR DOWN THE MODERN APARTHEID  
OF FORTRESS-EUROPE  
SOLIDARITY IS THE PEOPLE'S WEAPON**

**FAO (Federation for anarchist organizing,  
Slovenia & Croatia)**

**FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation, CRInt-FAI)**

**APO (Anarchist Political Organisation –  
Federation of collectives – Greece)**

**FA (Fédération Anarchiste, France & Belgium)**

**AF (Anarchist Federation, Britain)**

**FLA (Federación Libertaria Argentina)**

# AGAINST THE PANDEMIC AND THE ONGOING STATE AND CAPITALIST CRIME, SOCIETY WILL WIN

For some weeks now, we have been facing the whole spectrum of the deadly pandemic of the virus COVID-19. A virus that mostly endangers vulnerable groups of the population. The social and class majority faces disease and hundreds of thousands of people from our class are dying all over the world, deprived of the necessary means for their protection.

Today, it is revealed in the most tragic way the anti-social and murderous nature of the state and capitalist system that is not oriented towards satisfying the needs of the social majority, but, especially in time of crisis, towards limiting and depriving all necessary resources from the social and class base, expanding its parasitical existence upon it, committing another crime against it.

The appropriation by the economic and political elites of the socially produced wealth and the available resources, the over-concentration of population in large cities, in modern working "galleys", prisons and migrant and refugees concentration camps, the continuous degradation of the medical system, while the economic and political elites still have the ability to receive the best healthcare possible, reveal that: **The state and capitalist system, which already sentences millions of people to death from hunger, disease and war, is not giving a battle against the evolving pandemic, but for the preservation of the privileges and positions of power of the political and economic bosses.**

This is confirmed by the daily war announcements of the government that aim to remind us of the huge damage the whole crisis will cause to the economy and to ensure consensus on the social restructuring they are preparing to impose the next period of time, in order to support the capitalists due to the drop in their profitability. On the occasion of the evolving pandemic, a new attack against the workers and society is being prepared. We will be called to pay

what is presented today as "solidarity benefits" to the social base, with a huge cost to the lives of millions of people, who will emerge already wounded from the unequal battle.

**Because in reality the battle against the evolving pandemic is given by the social and class base, despite the adverse conditions our oppressors have imposed on us. The battle against the pandemic is given by all those that take all the necessary measures of personal and collective protection because they understand the risk for our fellow-human beings, paying them from their own pockets while they should be available to the whole population.** It is given by the doctors and medical staff, who with self-sacrifice and huge personal exhaustion, falling ill, put all their energies to save lives. It is given by all those who are forced to go to work every day, in courier services, in take-away shops, in public transport, in super-markets providing society with the necessary foodstuff, risking their own health, the farmers and the sanitation workers.

**It is the social and class base that, within difficult conditions, is showing its huge potential, fighting to withstand the pandemic, in a context of generalized poverty and misery. And it is the state and the capital, who continue to reproduce themselves, that are the obstacle in facing the pandemic, not the solution. Depriving food and medical material, all the existing resources for this battle, pricing human lives and speculating on death.** It is them who have nothing else to "promise" than the total militarization of society, the repression of those who survive. It is them who are already preparing the next slaughters, the imposition of a dystopia, by funding armies instead of hospitals, policemen instead of doctors. It is them who are promoting the interests of the companies and the bosses, while at the same time, they are plundering the workers' rights, with bosses' abuse and unaccountability increasing during the pandemic, through lay-offs, undeclared work, intensified exploitation. It is them who even now continue the repressive attacks against the people of the struggle, throwing immigrants out of their houses, beating and severely injuring antifascists, as happened recently in Rethymno. »

They are the same who have been trying for years to dissolve the public health structures by cutting off their budgets, by lay-offs, by shutting down hospitals, resulting in less available units of intensive care than those really needed. The doctors and nurses are giving a huge struggle and we stand in solidarity with them, supporting all their demands. **We demand the immediate and unconditional mass recruitment (instead of the mockery of short-term contracts and voluntary work) of doctors and nurses and the provision of all necessary resources and means, in order to cover the healthcare needs of the population, additional insurance coverage and care for all those working in the health sector, in order to avoid exhaustion and serious danger to their own health.**

They are the same who have trapped tens of thousands of people in extremely dangerous conditions. Their health is in an even greater risk due to their confinement in horrible conditions

and we will not tolerate of them being treated as expendable population. **We demand immediate support to all those who are imprisoned and the decongestion of prisons. We demand the release of the refugees and immigrants from the concentration camps and the requisitions of the empty hotels for their protection from the pandemic, as well as the creation of special health structures for all.**

They are the same who have impoverished the workers and the unemployed that are now facing the danger of hunger. We demand the immediate payment of all people, despite the status of their employers, and the special support for the poor and homeless. **The requisition of every available resource of the stolen social wealth, accumulated by the political and economic elites, for the needs of society is imperative.**

Any attempt of the state to continue its repressive campaign against the people and the structures of the struggle, within this context, will be a war



crime and will be dealt as such. Any arrests in the context of "business as usual" from the scums of the Ministry of Civil Protection mean that they do not hesitate to endanger the lives and health of the people of the struggle and of society in general, in order to achieve their goals.

**During this unprecedented condition that endangers the lives of many people, collective and personal protection do not mean by any chance a surrender to the desires of the state and capitalist dictatorship, who are planning to impose even harder living conditions to the social majority. We are staying at home due to reasons of social conscience, which are honest, in contrast to the hypocritical interest of the state and the bosses, who are forcing the social and class base to go to work, even if their working sector is not connected to the demanding needs of society, putting their lives in danger.** They are the same who quarantine the population, while they are making no effort to improve the health system, either by hiring new staff, or by opening new rooms of intensive care and providing medical equipment. The guardian of social conscience and solidarity is not and will never be the state and the police.

We are promoting the organization of special solidarity groups that will take all the necessary means of protection in order to support those who are extremely vulnerable.

**The resources for the protection of society exist, we, the workers, have produced them, however they are in the hands of a small minority who have proved several times that they disregard human lives, for the sake of their authority and wealth.** Since we know that the state and the bosses are forced to provide the basics only under social pressure, as they prefer to preserve the power and wealth of the elite instead of the health and lives of many thousands of people, whenever and wherever our conscience demands it we will be on the streets to fight for life against death, taking all the necessary precautions for our personal and collective protection against the pandemic.

The battle of the social and class base against the pandemic is the first and necessary step to preserve life. It is will be imperative to give another battle against the state and capitalist system, which imposed those conditions that made the spread of the virus deadlier, more massive, that now is imposing total control over us.

**Solidarity, mutual aid and the struggle cannot be prohibited or quarantined. The class war, especially from the bosses' side, has not been quarantined and must not cease from our side.**

We will go on, as humans and not as self-seeking "cannibals", as people of the struggle and not as terrorized and defeated, as anarchists, fighting for a society of free and equals, a society that will give priority to the protection of the most vulnerable, that its main and prime interest will be the social needs and a society, whose main concern will be the well-being and support of the people and not of a powerful caste that leads humanity to the dystopia of death, impoverishment and control. ▀

**No one fired, no one homeless, no one hungry, no one helpless and abandoned in the pandemic**

**NOT A STEP BACK TO OUR NEEDS**

**EVERYTHING FOR EVERYONE  
FOOD, HEATH, HOUSING**

**AGAINST THE DYSTOPIA OF MODERN  
TOTALITARIANISM, STATE AND CAPITALIST  
BRUTALITY THAT BRINGS DEATH...**

**SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND  
CLASS SELF-ORGANIZATION**

**Anarchist Political Organization-  
Federation of Collectives**

**You can follow and contact the APO via:  
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anpolorg@gmail.com  
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## Coronavirus and emergency: we don't forget which side of the barricade we are on

**In the face** of this crisis, state and capital are showing, with unprecedented evidence, all their enormous limitations and their structural inability to take into account people's needs and health.

In Italy, the political choices of governments have constantly cut public health (more than public, state). Part of the few resources have been diverted to private healthcare, even during the current emergency. The contemporary "regionalization", according to a corporate-capitalist model, has then made this service (which in theory should be universal) strongly differentiated between regions and regions, between rich and poor regions.

Patients have become clients and care services monetized within a general framework of competition and profit.

This approach to the health service reveals its true face at this dramatic moment, leaving us all at the mercy of its philosophy, which is certainly not that of human piety and the recognition of the other as our fellow human beings, but that of calculating the minimum material requirements for maximum profit, which now translates into the lack of equipped facilities, the lack of hired staff, the lack of consumables goods in warehouses.

The result is that the increasingly limited funds and increasingly reduced staff, already exploited to the limit in the ordinary, leave no margin for emergency situations. Except then to admit that the places in intensive care are running out, the staff is scarce, the respirators are not there and it will be necessary to make choices on who to treat, because is not possible to treat everyone. And all this when the State pays 70 million euros a day for military expenses. With the 70 million spent in just one of the 366 days of this leap year, six new hospitals could be built and equipped and there would be some money left over for masks, analysis laboratories and swabs for real screening. A

respirator costs 4,000 thousand euros, so you could buy 17,500 respirators a day, many more than you need now.

In recent weeks we have witnessed a total quackery of the political class in dealing with the emergency, with exponents from all political parties who have said everything and the opposite of everything, calling for closure and opening depending on what the opponent was calling for. We have seen the government appeal against the closure of schools by the Marche regional administration and then close the whole country a few days later, we have seen repugnant opportunisms and now we are witnessing the rhetoric of "we will make it".

If we do it, it will certainly not be thanks to national and regional governments. It will certainly not be thanks to the massive militarization of cities and borders. It will certainly not be thanks to the companies that, through Confindustria (association of industrial employers), have thrown down the mask by explicitly choosing profit. They have stated it clearly and distinctly, without lapses of words, without shame: let us not close down, production must go ahead. This has led to spontaneous strikes in many companies, with the big union centers chasing the struggles of workers who did not want to succumb to employers' claims. The pursuit of the regime unions has reached the goal of the ridiculous protocol signed on March 14, containing only obligations for workers and only recommendations for companies.

This disgusting cynicism, this hunger for profit combined with contempt for the health of those who work, precisely because expressed at such an exceptional time, must not pass, and they must be held accountable.

This crisis is paying off, above all, for those who work in health care and are under constant pressure from grueling shifts and increasing cases of contagion and deaths among the staff themselves.

No mainstream media has taken up the complaint of the lawyers of the nurses' association, an institution that has nothing subversive about it. In the dominant narrative nurses and nurses are described as heroes, as long as they get sick and die in silence,

without telling what happens in hospitals. Nurses who tell the truth are threatened with dismissal. Those who are infected are not recognised as having a workplace accident, so that the hospital company is not obliged to pay compensation to those who find themselves working every day without protection or with totally inadequate protection.

This crisis is paying for those who have an occasional or precarious job, currently without income and without any certainty of getting their jobs back after the epidemic has ended.

It is paying those who find themselves at home in telework having to reconcile an often very complex home presence with children or people to look after and contemporary productive obligations.

It is paying for those who are forced to go to their workplace without any guarantee of health.

Those who are poor, homeless, those who survive on the street or in a nomad camp are paying for it.

Workers are paying for it. Workers went on spontaneous strikes against the risk of contagion and were reproted by the police for violating government edicts because they were demonstrating on the streets for their health.

The prisoners of the democratic state are paying for it. Prisoners have given rise to riots in 30 prisons in defense of their own health. During the riots there were fourteen dead. Fourteen people who - they tell us - would all have died from an overdose from self-induced drugs. Fourteen people subjected to the responsibility of a system to which perhaps it did not seem true to be able to apply other containment measures with an iron fist, not so much of the infection but of the prisoners themselves.

In an explosive situation due to the already unworthy conditions that have been living inside prisons for years - in a structural and not exceptional way - the government has thought well to stop all visits without taking effective measures to protect the health of the prisoners.

Unfortunately, we are well aware that once this emergency phase is over, it will always be the same people who will lose out in terms of impoverishment and further exploitation. Because even if none of us have the crystal ball, it can already be predicted that they will use the excuse of "recovery", "economic recovery", "overcoming the crisis", to increasingly compress the spaces for struggle in the workplace and civil and political freedoms. It will not be a surprise if the rhetoric of "responsibility" will be used to further refine the disciplinary and social control mechanisms, to further restrict freedom of movement, to further restrict the freedom to strike and demonstrate, which is now in fact suspended. Already now the number of those reported for violation of the decrees exceeds that of those infected. On this we will be called upon to proactively monitor and act without hesitation.

We are in solidarity with all those who at this moment are risking their lives to save others, with all the personnel working in hospitals, with those who work and strike to guarantee safety conditions for themselves for others, with all those who cannot afford to #restareacasa (stay at home) because they don't have a home. We are in solidarity with those who are afraid because they fear for themselves and their loved ones. We sympathize with all those who have fallen ill and have been torn away from home without being able to have contact with their loved ones because of the absence of protective equipment, we sympathize with all those who are dying with palliative care because of the absence of adequate emergency facilities and we sympathize with those who have had to make decisions about the lives of others on who to intubate and who not in a desperate attempt to reduce the damage to a minimum when the damage is certain.

We will not forget who is responsible for what happens today: governments and states have sacrificed the health of us all by choosing profit, war and strengthening their power.

governments and states must not delude themselves: the struggles will not go into quarantine. ■

**Correspondence Commission of the Italian Anarchist Federation - FAI**

## We should respond to coronavirus with solidarity and not with military and violence!

**When in 2015** the people who were fleeing the war, violence and poverty massively rejected the order to stay "at home" this caused the security regime of Fortress Europe to temporarily broke down. The managers of the system of capitalist misery understood this as a signal to push for the introduction of new tools of surveillance of movement and life of all, not only of those with 'false documents'. At the time, in Slovenia, the government of extreme centre made a big effort to create an atmosphere of the state of emergency that was quickly filled by whole range of new measures aimed towards the resolution of the so called 'migrant crisis.' Even long after the government itself declared the crisis to be over, those measures were still in place. One of those was the change to the Law on Defense (Zakon o obrambi) and the insertion of new article 37a which states that the parliament can on the proposal of the government and for the purpose of securing the state border give to the military the powers that are otherwise reserved solely for the police: issuing of legal warnings to civilians, giving orders to civilians, temporary limitation the movement of civilian individuals and crowd control.

At the time a large part of the public made its best to resist the plan drafted by the extreme centrist government, but the authoritarian steamroller was too strong. The law was amended and the constitutional court who was under strong pressure from both the centristic and the rightwing extremists forbade the referendum who was called for by civil society. Many justified their opposition with a warning that the proposed change of the law would for the first time in history of Slovenian state create a possibility for the military to legally conduct surveillance and repression of civilian population, for an example in an event

of a new social crisis and popular resistance to the government's response to it that would inevitably follow. Only couple of years later the new extreme right government decided to invoke the article that was so nicely set for it in the law by the extreme centrists two governments ago.

What can we draw from this and other developments in order to better understand the world in time of coronavirus pandemic?

**1. Pandemic is real.** The fact is that people are dying and that some of us are particularly vulnerable. All of us therefore deserve appropriate health care, social security and protection from forced labour in health-threatening conditions. In this very moment thousands of people are carrying out extremely important tasks. Today it is finally clear to all that this society cannot function properly not only without health professionals, but also without cashiers in the supermarkets, drivers, electricians, cooks, waste-disposal workers and many others. But beyond the very important specific professions and activities in order for all the efforts to bring about a meaningful success in the fight against the virus the key is also in all of us who can build forms of mutual aid, be it small and spontaneous, or long-term and more organised. If in few days from now, when the first shock of the crisis conditions will be behind us, we will be able to direct our efforts towards the development of solidarity practices beyond the immediate family circle, then we will be able to say at some point the far future that under the immense and for everybody new burden of the crisis we managed to stay humans and take care of each other. Among our guiding principles should be that physical distance must not develop first into a social distance and then into social isolation. Let us not implement the quite revealing Freudian slip of the authorities and wherever possible organise by ourselves, at all times acting responsibly towards others and ourselves.

**2. The military does not contribute anything to the fight against the pandemic.** Most of the latter falls on the workers in public health system and especially on their capability to identify as soon as possible those that are in need of care and to then provide it absolutely. There is no space here for military that would march fully armed through the streets, causing anxiety and harassing dog walkers and the youth. We need to totally reject the idea that social and health problems can be solved by repression. Virus will be stopped by solidarity and care, not by guns and fines!

**3. No government deserves your trust!** The extreme right government of the moment plans well ahead. It is clear that after the first wave of anxiety people will start to reflect about which measures introduced to fight the pandemic made sense and which were just there to cover up the others whose purpose was to further impoverish the people, hand financial awards to those who are already rich and to introduce new authoritarian mechanisms of governance. In the name of prevention they adopt measures that have nothing to do with blocking the spread of the virus and narrow the space where freedom can exist. Taking the virus and the care for fellow humans seriously we should not allow any breathing space to the government that will try to fast track the implementation of measures that will hurt the most vulnerable among us!

**4. Let's organize!** Despite the fact that the state of emergency encourages the feeling that any opposition to the new and every measures is impossible, we should not fall in the trap of powerlessness. We are faced with a new challenge which we have to take on the chin and come up with new ways to think about how on the one hand we don't allow the virus to breathe, while on the other hand also we don't allow the state to pursue its arrogant narrowminded agenda – all while staying safe and responsible. The reason why the latter wants to convince us that we are at war is that then it can justifiably sacrifice us in the name

of a higher national calling. Therefore every measure needs to be evaluated by how much it contributes to the social, economic and health security of the most vulnerable among us. Pandemic will cause a lot of harm, but at some point it will be over, but the dictatorship will stay. Capitalist regime is once more making clear that it has nothing to offer to a large majority of the society. Every crisis that it encounters – often even produces – it survives by treating the people as easily replaceable commodities that are routinely thrown into misery. It cannot go on like this. We cannot suffer so much only for everything to return back to the same!

Let's think about what we can do in smaller groups, how we can help each other outside of state structures and above all how we can express our noncompliance with the state of emergency. Let's think if this month we will pay the bills (many don't even have the money to do so) and build a political movement out of this! Now, when Ljubljana is finally tourist-free, is the time to ask ourselves, why do we live in holes and still pay the rents as if we inhabit the luxury mansions of one of European capitals. Maybe, just maybe, we can learn from others from elsewhere and envision and then organize a rent strike?

If we are in debt and or if we are are already in the spiral of desperation, fear, insecurity, shame of our poverty, we should admit these feelings and situations to each other and then speak publicly about them. In this way we can open a path towards solutions that could widen the cracks in the system in which only the few profit. In this way we can and must rediscover what dignity means.

We are more than five! Against fear and state of emergency, for solidarity! Corona pushed capitalism to its knees, return to previous normality is not an option! ■

**Anarchist initiative Ljubljana  
APL – FAO – IFA,**

from soon to be occupied again Ljubljana

## The struggle against Covid-19 is also political

**The Covid-19 global** health crisis is one that required a global response led by health workers but with the consensus of almost everyone. Instead we face a piecemeal response, often in the form of repressive policing solutions that are not even particularly effective and where the borders between the states have undermined collective action and allowed the virus to multiply in the gaps.

Fear has led many to wish for harder state clampdowns as if a policing apparatus had any hope for substituting for collective solidarity between neighbours. The very ideology of neoliberal capitalism and its mantra of everyone looking after themselves has cut into the sort of community solidarity essential to popular enforcement of physical distancing. Thankfully in Ireland we discovered this process was not complete and a sufficient sense of solidarity remained that almost everyone implemented physical distancing measures before the state backed that process.

This virus is not a threat at the distances of national borders but in the short space between us and our friends, neighbours and fellow workers. Rather than wishing for the state to get tougher policing that space, we need to think and act collectively to organise this ourselves by building a common consensus around what needs to be done.

### Popular action

This has already happened in some places where popular action was ahead of state action, in Hong Kong in the early days and in Ireland in March where against all stereotypes popular demands mobilised through social media saw just about every pub close its doors ahead of the St. Patrick's Day weekend. We would presume there are many, many other examples yet to reach our ears, but stories of people self-organising seldom make it into the media.

None of this is to deny a potential need for draconian action in self defence. If the anarchist army of Ukraine could summarily execute those who spread anti-Semitic propaganda to prevent pogroms being triggered we are in no way uncomfortable measures to lockdown the virus.

While we would prefer to be in an anarchist society where these would be by popular consensus this is not yet the world we are living in so we are no more necessarily against justifiable state measures in this context than we are against laws requiring the observation of traffic lights or banning drunk driving. Our role thus is not some sort of absolutist opposition but rather to push for popular alternatives and limits on attempts to expand state power in anything but the most temporary and medically justified way.

On the other hand we don't see the state as a solution and this crisis illustrates that. States in general have made things worse by covering up and preventing action in several places. State imposed lockdowns have not been very successful where community consensus did not exist. How would you impose them between neighbours without either popular consensus or a cop in every household. And who then watches those cops.

### Border racism

Of course shut the border racists have tried to use the crisis for fascist propaganda but any reasonable analysis shows this distracted from the real long distance routes of transmission. The virus did not arrive in Ireland via the highly policed, slow and murderous routes refugees are forced to follow but via the fast jet travel of wealthier Irish citizens who were taking skiing holidays in northern Italy. Many of these were school kids, did those who saw closing the borders as a magic solution, were they seriously proposing leaving 10,000 school kids locked out of the country? It is clear that was an impossible 'answer' to long distance transmission - and distracted from what was needed and later introduced, a requirement that anyone arriving isolate themselves as far as possible for the subsequent two weeks.

Indeed in a general sense border racism has magnified the threat we all now face. Greece which has over the last couple of years created super concentrated unsanitary camps where refugees have been packed in and restricted. These camps are places where the people living there cannot self isolate or even regularly wash their hands. The people in these camps need to be allowed to disperse immediately and hotels and ferries provided so they can reach 'own door' shelter where those who become infected can self-isolate. This is not only essential for their survival but also for ours.

On a local level the long standing acceptance of racist structures has left us more rather than less vulnerable as a collective. In particular the cruelty of Direct Provision has created overcrowded conditions where self isolation is impossible but out of which a section of the capitalist class has made huge profits from such suffering. The halting sites where many Travellers live are over crowded and underfunded, and thus an example where our unique Irish acceptable racism has now magnified the risk we collectively face. Neoliberal Capitalism and increasing rents have created conditions where we have over 10,000 people in emergency accommodation, and increasing numbers of people who are homeless in our republic. In such conditions Covid 19 will rip through the most marginalised and discriminated people in our society.

### Profits & rents

A minority making huge profits from rent & low wages has meant many of our often migrant hospitality workers have been forced into living 4-6 to a room and afraid to call in sick when as a collective we need them to be able to. Again a situation that many of us have simply tolerated as it has worsened over the last decade.

Chronic underfunding of the health service will mean many many more deaths and it's not just ICU shortages, it becomes clear that the HSE had no stocks and no realistic plans for acquiring PPE equipment in the context of a pandemic. Rather than levelling with health workers, and telling them the truth as the facts emerged they

sought to silence them while lying to the public. Another example of where in this war we need to dispense with spin and communications gurus and be transparent and honest with the workers and the public. The current hope is that all volunteer crews of Aer Lingus workers will save the day by flying multiple flights to China to collect essential PPE supplies while having to live aboard their planes.

What can and should anarchists do? A lot of us are already doing it. Help organise community solidarity, build the power of health and other frontline workers, guard against state attempts at power grabs that go beyond immediate threat, expose dangerous racist lies that obscure what needs to be done to halt the virus.

The Direct Provision and overcrowding crisis means that vacant apartments, particularly REIT ones kept empty to evade rent controls must be put into use to provide homes that small groups can self isolate in. Hotels may be used to allow the population in homeless shelters to disperse to their own door rather than shared rooms.

Workers and activists in those sectors will have a much better sense of what should be demanded and routes of implementation but clearly we can say no one should be in unsafe overcrowding while potential homes lie empty to protect profit. National Traveller organisations are already trying to ensure provisions are made for Travellers in this pandemic.

We can support actions where workers self-protect - eg in Finland bus workers and elsewhere transport workers refuse to collect fares and ask that people access & leave the bus by the middle or back doors and not the front door which is beside them. Workers on construction sites and sanitation workers are still expected to work without it seems even basic steps like the provision of PPE, staggered lunch breaks & shift starting times to avoid overcrowding and the end of work that cannot be done safely because of the need to maintain physical distances. »

## Our only power is collective

What the Covid-19 virus does not do is discriminate. All humans can be infected, regardless of wealth, class, where you live, what you do, or how you think. Therefore, it will not be defeated by us acting as individuals, it will only be defeated by us acting collectively. As anarchists, we have always maintained that power resides in the collective, and in these conditions, given what we know about this, we the people are doing the right things, to prevent the virus spreading. This is done from a basis of self-defence, but it also resides on the foundation of solidarity. Together we are stronger. There is an Irish - saying that goes 'Ní neart go cur le Chéile' - There is no strength without unity. That goes back to the 12th century long before Capitalism, but not before plagues like the black death which wiped out half of all Europeans in the 14th century. Now, in the 21st we face this enemy again, and we know that it is only by facing it as a collective that we will prevail.

Above all else though we need to prepare for the time after the virus. A lot of things like eviction bans that our rulers insisted were impossible have suddenly turned out to be almost instantly achievable. The health crisis has laid bare the unequal nature of our society and the way that inequality puts us all in danger. Authoritarian politicians turned out to be incapable of acting rationally and fast, organic grassroots responses were swifter and more effective. A lot of people have noticed these things and with all those people we need to draw everyone into a conversation about what sort of society we want to live in, one that no longer treats the economy as a separate sphere best left to find its own way. The strength that we will draw on as a collective in this time will be brought to bear on this system which is proving, at this time of greatest need, to be unfit for purpose. ■

- Workers Solidarity Movement

**The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.**

**Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom. We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other.**

**Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its on going reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.**

[www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie)



# ANTIUNIVERSITY MAYDAY FEST 1-3 MAY WORK IN A TIME OF A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC

This year, in addition to our regular summer festival on 6-13 June, we will be holding a mini Mayday Fest on 1-3 May.

For the Mayday programme we invite our community of organisers to rethink:  
**Work in a Time of a Global Epidemic**

How does the virus affect our relationship to waged and unwaged labour? To production and social reproduction? And to our personal and collective position in relations to capital, property and the state?

We are looking for your thoughts and actions in response to the current crisis and would love to hear from people plotting and scheming around labour rights, supply chains, care, trade unions, logistics, borders and anything else work related.

Both festivals will take place in new real and virtual spaces and, as always, we encourage you to be as creative as possible - think self guided walks, online workshops, shortwave radio, long distance music making, post art, shouting across a field...

Registration for the entire programme (May / June) will open on 12 April.

Like in previous years, we will hold facilitation workshops for new and old organisers on 17 April, 7pm and 18 April, 2pm.

[www.antiuniversity.org](http://www.antiuniversity.org)

# COVID-19 FAQ

Recently, there has been a lot of confusion about COVID-19, as well as large amounts of misinformation. This confusion and misinformation is potentially dangerous, so it is hoped that this brief FAQ will help to alleviate any confusion, and to dispel any misinformation about COVID-19.

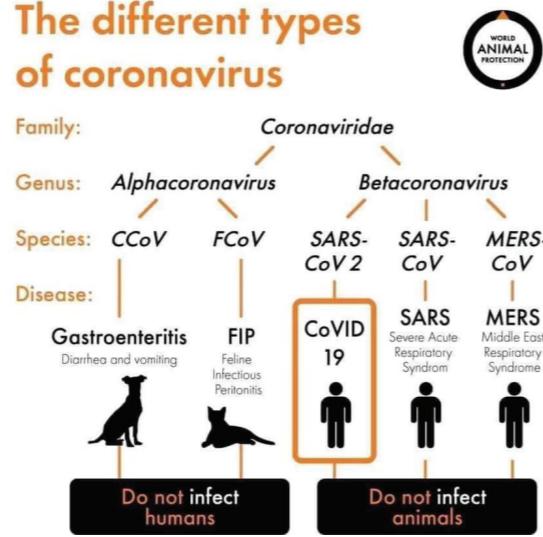
## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease that is caused by a new strain of coronavirus, which has been given the name SARS-CoV-2 by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. The name, COVID-19, is an abbreviation for 'Coronavirus Disease 2019', with 2019 being the year in which the first cases of the disease came from. Around the world, epidemiologists, states, organisations and individuals have taken measures to mitigate the number of cases of COVID-19, which has become a global pandemic and killed many people; without measures to control the disease, it will kill many more.

## What are Coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a group of related viruses that affect both mammals and birds. The vast majority of coronaviruses induce respiratory tract infections, although in cows and pigs they tend to induce diarrhoea. Coronaviruses are named for their fringe of bulbous projections, which resemble a solar corona (the aura of plasma surrounding a star). Coronaviruses were first discovered in chickens in the 1930s, and the first coronaviruses in Humans were discovered in the 1960s. The severity of the infections caused by coronaviruses can vary greatly; some coronaviruses, such as the virus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), can kill up to a third of those they infect, whilst some coronaviruses induce only very mild infections and are part of the group of viruses that cause the common cold. Whilst the mortality rate of COVID-19 is much lower than that of MERS, it still can induce fatal symptoms, especially amongst older individuals or individuals with pre-existing medical conditions.

## The different types of coronavirus



## Where did COVID-19 come from?

The first cases of COVID-19 were reported in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China. The strain of coronavirus that causes COVID-19 originated in bats, making it a zoonotic disease, or a disease that was transferred from other animals to humans, although there is no current evidence that would suggest that domestic animals, such as cats and dogs, can be infected by COVID-19. It is believed that the virus infected another species of animal, which acted as an intermediate host, before infecting humans; this species could potentially be a species of pangolin, as very closely related viruses have been discovered in pangolins, although the identity of the intermediate host has not yet been confirmed. Because of the zoonotic origins of COVID-19, the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, where exotic animals are sold both dead and alive, was previously believed to be the source of the first transmission of the virus to humans, but more recent research suggests that this may not be the case.

## How dangerous is COVID-19?

Whilst the majority of people who become infected with COVID-19 can expect to survive with no significant implications for their health (in fact, many people will be infected without realising it), it has an average mortality rate

of approximately 3.5% across age groups, meaning that if 68,000,000 people, roughly the number of people in the UK, were infected with COVID-19, we could expect around 2,380,000 people to die as a result of that infection. Those most vulnerable to COVID-19 are those with pre-existing medical conditions, those without reliable access to healthcare, and those who are elderly; amongst those aged 70 to 79, the mortality rate increases to approximately 8%, and, amongst those aged 80 and older, the mortality rate increases to just under 15%. It should be noted that this mortality rate is a preliminary estimate, and we will likely not get an accurate mortality rate until the end of the pandemic; for example, the mortality rate may be lower, as many people with the coronavirus who survive have not been tested, or it may be higher, as many people with the coronavirus who die have not been tested or have had the cause of death falsely attributed to something else, but we can assume that 3.5% is a reasonable figure. It is also important to note that the measures taken to control and treat COVID-19 can greatly influence the mortality rate in a given area; in South Korea, the mortality rate is approximately 0.7% as testing was widely and easily available and financial support was given to those who needed to isolate, ensuring that the transmission was more readily controlled and healthcare systems were not overburdened.

Some people have tried to downplay COVID-19 by comparing it to the seasonal flu; such downplaying of the severity of COVID-19 is dangerous, and the comparison is flawed, because the seasonal flu has a mortality rate of only 0.1%, seven times less than the mortality rate in South Korea and thirty-five times less than the average mortality rate. In addition, the transmission rate of COVID-19 is greater than the transmission rate of the seasonal flu; the average flu patient spreads the disease to about 1.3 other people, whilst the average COVID-19 patient spreads the disease to about 2 to 2.5 other people.

The main threat posed by COVID-19 is that healthcare systems will be overwhelmed by an

influx of new patients infected by the disease, resulting in many patients suffering from COVID-19, as well as patients suffering from other conditions, being unable to receive the treatment that they need and dying as a result. The threat caused by the influx is exacerbated by the fact that the spread of COVID-19, if left unchecked, is exponential so the number of patients will increase more and more rapidly each day until an unexpected influx occurs; it took three months for the first 100,000 cases of COVID-19 to be reported, but only 12 days for the next 100,000.

## What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a high-temperature, a persistent cough and breathing difficulties; these symptoms are similar to the symptoms caused by many minor, common illnesses. Some preliminary research has indicated that anosmia, the loss of the sense of smell or taste, could also be a symptom, but this has not been confirmed and most of the evidence for this symptom is anecdotal. More severe symptoms, which can lead to death, include lung damage and pneumonia, the swelling of, or entry of bodily fluids into, the lungs.

These symptoms are caused as the virus attacks cells in the respiratory tract, such as goblet cells, which produce mucus to trap pathogens and stop them from infecting the respiratory system, and ciliated cells, which ensure that this mucus does not build up to dangerous amounts by 'brushing' it up to the oesophagus, where it can be swallowed and destroyed in stomach acid alongside the trapped pathogens. As the virus kills these cells, the dead tissue creates blockages that clog up the lungs and cause them to swell and produce fluid, stopping breathing from occurring normally. In addition, the virus can induce a hyperimmune response, meaning that it causes the body's immune system to perform an abnormally large attack against the virus that also damages healthy cells and tissues. »

## Is there a cure?

Despite some sources reporting that certain substances may act as a cure, there is no evidence suggesting that a cure for COVID-19 exists; the misleading nature of these reports can have devastating effects, with around 300 people dying in Iran after drinking methanol, which was falsely purported as a cure by posts and articles on social media. Although there is no cure, in the majority of cases, the symptoms of COVID-19 can be treated and the patient expected to survive.

There are hopes that a vaccination against COVID-19 will be developed. Vaccinations function by using an inert form, or harmlessly small amount, of a virus to trigger the body's immune response, so that the immune system can develop a 'memory' of a virus, allowing it to destroy the virus rapidly when it next encounters the virus, before symptoms can develop. A vaccination would be able to directly prevent people from suffering from COVID-19, and would indirectly protect those unable to take or access the vaccination by greatly reducing the ability of the virus to be transmitted amongst the population. It is currently unclear whether a vaccination for COVID-19 would be distributed generally amongst the population, like the vaccination against measles, or distributed only to those most at risk, as is the case with the vaccination against the flu. It is also unclear how rapidly the virus causing COVID-19 would mutate, and how often new vaccinations would need to be distributed to people. It is unlikely that a vaccination will be available until 12 to 18 months in the future, after it has been developed, tested for its safety and efficacy in clinical trials of various sizes, and instructions for its production given to manufacturers, but different factors have already begun to speed up the process; the first human trial has already begun in the U.S.A after researchers were permitted to skip the animal trials that are usually required to be performed first (the technique that they used is extremely unlikely to cause any harm), and there are hopes that previous research into a vaccination, which was never produced due to a lack of funding, for another, closely related coronavirus, can be applied to help create a vaccination against COVID-19.

## What can I do to stay safe and to stop the spread of COVID-19?

If you are not particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and do not show any symptoms, try to stay in your home as much as possible, and, if possible, only go out for essential shopping, medical needs and daily exercise. If you do have to leave the house, try to maintain a distance of 2 metres, about the arm-span of an average adult, away from other people who do not live with you. These measures are commonly referred to as 'social distancing', although many health experts prefer the term 'physical distancing' in order to emphasise the importance of keeping in contact with friends and family via phone-calls and other methods of communication that can be used whilst maintaining a safe distance. Physical distancing helps to minimise the likelihood that you will become infected with COVID-19, or that you will transmit the disease to other people.

If you are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, you should not leave your home at any point during the next twelve weeks, and not permit anyone to enter your house aside from a minimal number of people to ensure that you are kept well and your needs are met. It may also be advisable to avoid handling any mail that you receive until a period of 24 hours has elapsed since it arrived. These measures, which help to ensure that you will not be infected by COVID-19, are referred to as 'shielding'.

If you show any symptoms of COVID-19, you should not leave your home at any point for the next seven days, or until you stop showing symptoms if they persist for longer than seven days, and you should remain at a distance of 2 metres away from anyone in your home. In addition, if you live with other people, none of you should leave the home for a period of two weeks from the date that the first person in the household showed symptoms; anyone who displays symptoms at a later date than the first person should also refrain from leaving the home for their own period of seven days, starting from the date that they started to show symptoms, in addition to the period of two weeks for everyone

in the home. These measures are called 'self-isolation' and are necessary to prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people. If your symptoms start to become severe, contact your local healthcare service.

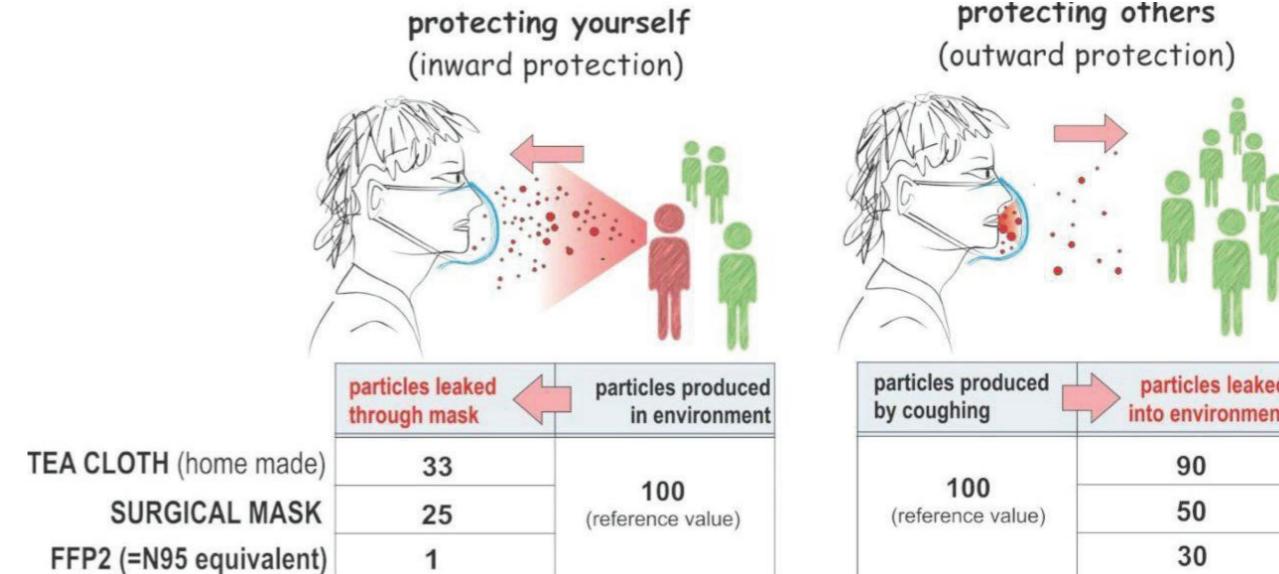
In addition, you should be performing basic sanitary measures to mitigate the spread of the virus. If you need to cough or sneeze, do so into a tissue, which should then be disposed of, or, if a tissue is not available, into the crook of your arm. You should avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. You should also wash your hands with warm water and soap, or a hand sanitizer gel, every time you touch an unfamiliar or unwashed surface, enter a new location, exit your home, or before eating.

## Does 5G cause COVID-19?

No, though it will give you up to and over 2Gbit/s connection speeds aiding of social development in an ever more digital age. Mind you the network should really be operated and owned by communities instead of capitalists.

While often deeply racist in their nature the conspiracy theories over 5G mostly focus on the use of higher frequency millimetre wavelengths.

Higher frequency doesn't mean higher intensity: it's really like comparing blue with red light – it's a different wavelength, that's it.



## Should I wear a mask?

While there is a shortage of FFP2 (KN95, and N95) rated respirators and these should be reserved for those who work in those in a clinical or otherwise high risk environment, the benefits of more general masks and even home made solutions should not be underestimated.

Historically the W.H.O. and various governmental bodies have not directed the public to wear masks due to the perception that without being able to convey a nuanced message the public may be given a false sense of security and become lax with maintaining high degrees of hygiene and social distancing practices, for this reason they generally don't advise wearing gloves either.

This has created much confusion about whether or not people should wear masks.

We go further into the science, social and political issues regarding masks on Page XYZ, however in short the answer is yes, wear a damn mask or cover your face up through other means. This is imperative not just for your own wellbeing but to minimise transmission and spread. This is now the message from bodies such as the CDC.

Just remember to wash for 20 seconds before removing the mask then do so without touching your face and clean your masks between uses. ■

# WHO ARE THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION?

We're class struggle Anarchists.

We fight with revolutionary theory and praxis for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst all and people are free to reach their full potential within a classless society. We do not seek power or control for our organisation but to work as part of a united international revolutionary movement which is diverse in character and founded in the principles of mutual aid, compassion and solidarity.

Capitalism and the state are systems of oppression that exploit the working class and destroy the environment for the benefit of the ruling class. The dynamic between master and worker, the oppressor and oppressed, infects every aspect of our society. Genuine liberation will not come with a process of concessions or reforms it will come with the complete dissolution of the master, and the complete building of a fair and just society for the working class.

We fight systems of oppression that divide the working class and feel that this is essential to class struggle. The revolutionary call has no place for bigotry of any form and solidarity needs to be complete and overt, not granted on its convenience. Where the working class oppresses each other the ruling class benefit as they do from cross-class movements which appeal to factors of our identity to obfuscate real class differences and achieve little results for the downtrodden.

It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without first building a culture of resistance. A self empowered working class will achieve this better world through political unity and the development of a wide network of autonomous organisations working together in a federative manner, freely associating as individuals unified by our collective aims and principles.

We forward this social revolution as an organisation and as individuals, in the workplace, on the street, in the home and on-line through the creation of media, the organisation of

book fairs, facilitating the creation of autonomous collectives as equals and providing vital resources, skill sets and support to an array of groups and individuals both domestically and world-wide as part of the International Federation of Anarchists.

AFed has a number of vital roles to perform in order to reach these goals:

- Support resistance against capitalism, state, and other oppression where it exists, and attempt to spark it where it does not.
- Produce information and analysis against capitalist society and argue the case for anarchist communism.
- Be the memory of the working class by making the lessons of past gains and defeats widely known.
- Be a forum for debate and discussion between all elements of the revolutionary working class.
- Work to understand the developments in our society and deliver a coherent communist response to them.
- Seek to win the leadership of ideas within the working class.
- Intervene and co-ordinate our actions in the workplace and the community.
- Work to build a global anarchist movement as part of the International of Anarchist Federations.

We do not shirk the responsibilities of building a better world, we endeavour to take on the difficult conversations that face us and develop our ideas alongside the rich and diverse community of activists, organisers and revolutionaries always learning from the struggles of others to build together and ignite the flames of change.

**JOIN THE REVOLUTION  
ANARCHIST FEDERATION  
AFED.ORG.UK**

## AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

**1.** The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

**2.** Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

**3.** We believe that fighting systems of oppression that divide the working class, such as racism and sexism, is essential to class struggle. Anarchist communism cannot be achieved while these inequalities still exist. In order to be effective in our various struggles against oppression, both within society and within the working class, we at times need to organise independently as people who are oppressed according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. We do this as working class people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for us. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

**4.** We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

**5.** As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

**6.** It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

**7.** Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

**8.** Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

**9.** As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

**10.** We have a materialist analysis of capitalist society. The working class can only change society through our own efforts. We reject arguments for either a unity between classes or for liberation that is based upon religious or spiritual beliefs or a supernatural or divine force. We work towards a world where religion holds no attraction.



The International of Anarchist Federations (IAF or IFA) was founded during an international anarchist conference in Carrara in 1968 by the three existing European federations of France, Italy and Spain as well as the Bulgarian federation in French exile. To counter the internationalisation of state and capitalist powers that are developing their influences ever rapidly on a global scale, the IFA has since aimed to build and improve strong and active international anarchist structures.

The federations associated with IFA believe that such an organisation is necessary to co-ordinate their international work and efficiently co-operate towards their mutual aims.

To further improve the quality of exchange and co-operation, IFA also keeps close contact with other anarchist organisations, such as the IWA.

The principles of work within IFA are that of federalism, free arrangement and mutual aid. To improve co-ordination and communication within IFA, as well as to provide an open contact address for the public and other anarchist groups and organisations, an International Secretariat was set up. The Secretariat irregularly rotates among the IFA federations. Most of the federations produce regular publications.

For further information contact us:-

Website - [i-f-a.org](http://i-f-a.org)

Twitter - [IntFedAnarchist](#)

FB - [InternationalOfAnarchistFederations](#)

- Federación Libertaria Argentina (FLA)  
[federacionlibertaria.org](http://federacionlibertaria.org)
- Iniciativa Federalista Anarquista (IFABrasil)  
[anarkio.net](http://anarkio.net)
- Anarchist Federation (AF)  
[afed.org.uk](http://afed.org.uk)
- Федерация на анархистите в България (ФАБ)  
[anarchy.bg](http://anarchy.bg)
- Anarchistická federace (AF)  
[afed.cz](http://afed.cz)
- Fédération Anarchiste (FA)  
[federation-anarchiste.org](http://federation-anarchiste.org)
- Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist\*innen (Fda)  
[fda-ifa.org](http://fda-ifa.org)
- Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI)  
[federazioneanarchica.org](http://federazioneanarchica.org)
- Federación Anarquista de México (FAM)  
[federacionanarquistademexico.org](http://federacionanarquistademexico.org)
- Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI)  
[federacionanarquistaiberica.wordpress.com](http://federacionanarquistaiberica.wordpress.com)
- Federacija za anarhistično organiziranje (FAO)  
[a-federacija.org](http://a-federacija.org)

# INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION ON COVID-19



## LIVESTREAM APRIL 11

**12 PM PST**

A live panel discussion on the global health crisis, featuring delegates from working class organizations around the world.



**BLACKROSEFED.ORG/LIVESTREAM**

# BE A NEIGHBOURHOOD HERO

LOOK TO JOIN  
**#MUTUAL  
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GROUPS IN  
YOUR  
AREA!

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RECIPROCAL  
EXCHANGE OF  
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TODAY, SO THEY CAN  
HELP YOU  
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